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### Abstract

As the number of Chinese retiree is increasing, seniors' mental health care has become a major social issue. In China, "Active aging" where retirees helped to construct the society was proven to be an effective way to avoid their mental diseases. However, existing activities in "Active aging" programs might not fit for the local seniors' real interests and dreams. On the other hand, due to the modernization and globalization, many Chinese traditions are endangered. To preserve the tradition, elderly people, who have better knowledge in this field, will play an essential role. This thesis was focused on ceramic retirees and ceramic culture conservation in Fengxi, which is the Ceramic Capital of China. It aimed at providing a delicate solution that can activate ceramic retirees through passing on their ceramic knowledge.

To understand Fengxi retirees' life attitude and their opinions towards their ceramic knowledge heritage, design probes and in-depth interviews were conducted with ceramic retirees. With the understanding, the design direction was then elaborated. To create desired solutions for both retirees and potential heritors, three co-create workshops were then organized. Based on the pervious studies, the final concept HONGLO ceramic community was created. Field research, stakeholder map and in-depth interview were then used to the other stakeholders to discuss the sustainability and feasibility of the design proposal. In the end, a service collaborator was found. A service prototype was thus built to test the service experience, explore how to operate the service, and how to bring the concept to life.

In the project, I co-designed the solution with the local community and other social parties. Different service design methods were used, which showed how these methods worked in the collaboration. In the end, I reflected on the design process and discussed how the designer can collaborate with different stakeholders to create a desirable, sustainable and feasible solution, and what are the challenges to collaborate with the local community and the public sectors.

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**Keywords** Service design, Active aging, Chinese culture conservation

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ACTIVATING FENGXI RETIREES' LIFE  
THROUGH SERVICE CO-DESIGN:  
A design proposal and challenges





Activating Fengxi retirees' life through service  
co-design: a design proposal and challenges

Master's Thesis 2012

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## ABSTRACT

As the number of Chinese retiree is increasing, seniors' mental health care has become a major social issue. In China, "Active aging" where retirees helped to construct the society was proven to be an effective way to avoid their mental diseases. However, the existing activities in "Active aging" programs might not fit for the local seniors' real interests and dreams. On the other hand, due to the modernization and globalization, many Chinese traditions are endangered. To preserve the tradition, elderly people, who have better knowledge in this field, will play an essential role. This thesis was focused on ceramic retirees and ceramic culture conservation in Fengxi, which is the Ceramic Capital of China. It aimed at providing a delicate solution that can activate ceramic retirees through inheriting their ceramic knowledge.

To understand Fengxi retirees' life attitude and their opinions towards their ceramic knowledge heritage, design probes and in-depth interviews were conducted with ceramic retirees. With the understanding, the design direction was then elaborated. To create desired solutions for both retirees and potential heritors, three co-create workshops were

then organized. Based on the pervious studies, the final concept HONGLO ceramic community was created. Field research, stakeholder map and in-depth interview was then used to the other stakeholders to discuss the sustainability and feasibility of the design proposal. In the end, a service collaborator was found. A service prototype was thus built to test the service experience, explore how to operate the service, and how to bring the concept to life.

In the project, I co-designed the solution with the local community and other social parties. Different service design methods were used, which showed how these methods worked in the collaboration. In the end, I reflected on the design process and discussed how the designer can collaborate with different stakeholders to create a desirable, sustainable and feasible solution, and what are the challenges to collaborate with the local community and the public sectors.

Part one

# INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background:

1.1.1 "Active aging" in China

Chinese population is aging rapidly, where more than 30% of the population is expected to be age 60 or older in 2050 (Ding and Cheung 2010). A study on Chinese elderly people's psychological healthy showed that 85% of Chinese elderly people have got mental problems in some extend, 27% of them have significant anxiety and depression, and 0.34% of them have certain symptoms of schizophrenia, 0.75% are suffering from Alzheimer's diseases (Bagui Urban News 2002). Mental health care for elderly people has become a major social issue in China.

Du Peng (2011), professor of Gerontological Society of China, who had studied on aging population and aging problems of China for many years, pointed out "Active aging" can help to avoid psychological diseases, such as social isolation, depression and Alzheimer's diseases. It provides older adults the opportunity to show their talents and social value by enhancing their social participation and fulfilling their life. In 1993, Xiong Bijun, honorary director of the China Gerontological Society, defined "Active aging" as "under the premise of voluntary, seniors want to contribute to the country's stability, the development of socialist material, and the spiritual civilization which is

'involvement in social development' in short"(translations are my own),(original quote in Chinese: 老有所为是老年人在自愿量力的前提下, 为国家的稳定与发展, 为社会主义的物质文明建设和精神文明建设再做贡献。" 简称为 "参与社会发展 "). Except self-benefits, "Active aging" also helps to develop the Chinese society. As Wu Cangping (2011), one of the founders of Chinese demographic and gerontology, pointed out in accordance to the increasing numbers of retired intellectuals in China, "Active aging" will be a need for the social development. Programs of "Active aging" in China started 30 years ago, below are two of the most successful cases.

"Good-neighborliness" point

In 2010, Shanghai launched the "Good-neighborliness" point plan that encourages the old volunteers to open their living room to elderly people who have the shared interest. The requirement is really simple: the living place should be under three floors and be able to fit five people, and the host has to be hospitable and cheerful. Every month, seniors with common interest meet two to three times in the living room to avoid their social isolation and loneliness (Wu 2012). Another "Good-neighborliness" point in Shanghai encourages retirees to share their professional skills. For example, in the community a retired doctor can look after the other seniors' health, and a retired teacher can supervise homework

of other seniors’ grandchildren, etc. With this service, seniors are connected again, removing the distance from their neighbors (She 2011).

*"Silver Age" Action*

"Silver Age" Action was a project launched by the Chinese National Committee on Aging, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology in 2003, in which senior intellectuals will aid the Development Campaign of the Western China. There were already 23 provinces and municipal cities in China who joined the action experiment at that moment (Research Center of Chinese Population and Develop 2007). In "Sliver Age" action, seniors used different ways to contribute to the society. For example,

retired doctors from other city went to Urumqi to provide local residents with free body check-ups (Tianshan Net 2012), elderly people opened free libraries for the public with their own private book collection (Sliver Age Action webpage), seniors went to the countryside for charity performance (Sliver Age Action webpage).

However, Du Peng (2011) pointed out "Active aging" also requires *"removing seniors' mental barriers and enhancing their self-understanding"*(translations are my own)( original quote in Chinese: 发挥老年人自身的主观能动性, 克服老年人自身的障碍 ). Therefore, only organizing activities for seniors might not be enough to activate them. At the moment, all the actions in "Active

aging" program are organized by the seniors committee using the "top-down" process, of which local elderly people's aspirations and wishes might be ignored.

The "Active aging" programs were started from seniors in urban areas. Elderly people from rural China may not yet have the chance to attend those programs. From the study of rural seniors' psychological life and needs (Kang et al. 2010), I found that the rural seniors' fundamental needs of their material life are fulfilled, they now focus more on their psychological needs. As numerous young people moved to work in the city, large amount of rural elderly people were left behind to suffer from loneliness and emptiness. The authors of this study conducted

their research with 100 rural seniors where almost half of the elderly people complained about the unsatisfactory entertainment. Doing housework, playing Mahjong and exercising are their main activities to kill time. Chinese Political Consultative Committee (2012) also studied the rural seniors' mental health. From their research, they added two more factors that cause rural senior's psychological problems. One factor was the lacking guidance from governmental organizations. They explained that without enough attention on rural senior's mental health and proper support from the government, rural seniors' life become dull and monotonous. The other factor was that young people only provided the financial support for their parents but ignored the mental



communication with them.

From the studies above, we can see that “Active aging” was proven to be an effective way for solving Chinese elderly people’s mental problems through social constructing. However, we noticed that in “Active aging” where the senior committee organized activities for elderly people, local seniors’ interests and wishes might not be considered. In addition, only urban seniors have the opportunity to attend that program right now. Although rural seniors’ psychological needs are increasing, without sufficient attention and proper support, they are still suffering from a monotonous life.

1.1.2 Problems of inheriting traditional Chinese culture

Chinese traditional culture is one of the world’s oldest, which includes ways of thinking, values, morality, lifestyle, etiquette system, customs, religion, literature, art, education and so on. The Chinese traditional culture is the identity card and symbol of the Chinese nation, which make it different from other ethnic groups. However, due to globalization and modernization, many traditions are in an endanger stage.

To preserve and inherit the traditional culture, we should “root the traditional culture in citizens’ heart” as it was said from Zhang Xianyu (2012), from Museum of Lingcheng, who studied

how to preserve the Chinese tradition. Zhang (2012) emphasized that “letting more people understand traditional culture and getting close to it will let traditional culture root in people’s heart, which will become the foundation for the traditional culture heritage.” She also researched existing channel to achieve this goal, which include opening courses, promoting through media, and through reading. However, Chao Lin (2006), who is the journalist of Chinese Youth Daily, argued that to inherit traditional culture, opening courses, promotion through media, and through reading are too superficial. “Young people should learn through their actions.” He said that, “tradition cannot be inherited in a minute. Just

open courses and building museums are inadequate to inherit the culture. Ordinary people do not always keep in mind ‘the traditions are going to disappear, and we need to preserve them’. Inheriting the traditional culture is still far away from ordinary people’s daily life.”

Existing channel only introduce traditional cultures to ordinary people, there is rare channels for the youth to further explore. Heritage culture requires culture edification that everyday people can immerse and learned from their environment and life experience. To build such an environment, the older generation will play an essential role, since they are the ones around us who know more about our traditions.



Figure 1.1. location of Fengxi

1.2 Research focus

In my thesis, I will focus on activating rural retirees in China and inheriting the local culture through them. Since the Chinese customs and traditions vary greatly between towns, cities and provinces, I have selected one of the areas in China named Fengxi, which is the Ceramic Capital of China and focused on the ceramic retirees and ceramic culture conservation in this area.

1.2.1 Aging problems in Fengxi

Fengxi is located in the Guangdong Province in People’s Republic of China (Figure 1.1). According to the statistic

from Chaozhou Governmental Municipal Bureau(2012), aging population in Chaozhou increased quickly in the past 10 years. By 2008, 11.9% of Chaozhou citizens were over 60. The aging population was forecasted to increase to 14% in 2015.

However, current services provided by the government and public organizations for retirees are poor in terms of entertainment and social inclusion. In the earlier research on the biggest community for Fengxi seniors’ entertainment (Chen 2012), it is said that in many local residents’ mind, the senior community is only a place for gambling (Figure 1.2). Due to the insufficient healthy life guidance for retirees, some elderly people started



Figure 1.2. Elderly people in Fengxi senior community: For many local residents, the senior community is only a place for gambling(Chen Yishang 2012)



to go to superstitious activities, some started to gamble, and some just stay at home all the day long and suffer from loneliness and social isolation.

1.2.2 Problems of Fengxi ceramic culture heritage

Fengxi as Ceramics Capital of China has more than 1400 years ceramics history. It is the biggest ceramics export base in China, of employing 4,000 ceramic factories and 50,000 ceramic workers (PMFMC 2012). However, Fengxi ceramic culture is now under threat. In 4000 ceramic factories, only 228 of them have their own brand. Most of the factories are just manufacturing ceramics for others with low add-values (Qu 2008). Traditional Fengxi ceramics, such as ceramic painting, porous porcelain

and porcelain flower (Figure 1.3), are disappearing in the commercial competition. For example, Qu Zhiwei, director of Guangdong Fengxi Ceramics Industry Research Institute , said that in the 1970s, there were many state owned ceramics factories creating and producing traditional Fengxi porous porcelain and porcelain flower. However, from 1990s, producing of traditional ceramics decreased rapidly, because compared with the modernized production, the traditional ceramics was too complicate and inefficient. (Yangyuan 2011).

To preserve and develop the Fengxi ceramics industry, the Chinese government has built a ceramic school and several ceramic mater studios in



Figure 1.3. Traditional Fengxi▶

Fengxi. However, only small groups of people have the opportunity to attain this knowledge. For people who are interested in ceramics but study in another major, they may not get the opportunity to explore this tradition. Large amount of citizens in Fengxi thus do not know how to appreciate this culture and contribute their knowledge to develop it.

In the rural area, retirees' welfare is still underdeveloped. Numerous Fengxi ceramic retirees who became wealthy from their experience and skills in traditional crafts are now bored at home or living in a monotonous life. Caring for their psychological health and motivating them to live healthier has become a big social issue. On the other

hand, large amount of ordinary people in Fengxi may not have the chance to experience or explore the ceramic culture. In my thesis, I envisioned that inheriting retirees' ceramic knowledge could help activate them, thus focused on the **Fengxi ceramic retirees and their ceramic knowledge heritage**.

**1.3 Service designer's role in social innovation**

Traditional innovations, such as business innovation and technology innovation, only focus on a specific field or the profit of the near future. Larger problems and non-profit issues, such as the environmental pollution, citizens' health and cultural preservation are ignored, therefore leads to great social problems. Social innovation thus existed to create a sustainable society (Miettinen and Koivisto 2009).

*Social innovations are innovative activities and services motivated by the goal of meeting a social need*

*that are predominantly developed and diffused through organizations whose primary purpose are social (Mulgan 2006).*

In recent years, designers were increasingly involved in social innovation. For example, many EU service design studios, such as, Live/work, Engine, Think Public have participated in social innovations, as well as Desis network led by Ezio Manzini and IDEO in USA (Emilson and Seravalli 2010). In China, designers also started to contribute to this field, for example through participating in Desis network(Desis network webpage) and social innovation China network(social innovation China webpage).

There are strong motive for using service



design in social innovation. For example, the Design Council (Burns et al. 2006) in UK claimed that *service design is considered to be a useful tool for social innovation because:*

- *Holistic approach*, both service and social innovations are complex systems formed by different stakeholders. Service design is a useful method to bring together different views to build a common perspective as a base for new robust solutions.

- *People based*, as Sophia Parrker says, “...Services are intangible, their value being created only in the moment of interaction between a person and a service. It is only deep

*immersion in this experience that service designers can capture and tacit dimensions of the experience, as well as its more visible aspects...”(Parker 2009). This knowledge that service design brings can be used to develop social innovation since it is also depend on people’s behavior and interactions. (Anders and Anna )*

In my thesis, I will work as a facilitator during co-design process, a designer when generating ideas and visualize them, and a coordinator while concerning the collaboration between the local community and other social parties. My background, as a person who was born in Chaozhou and lived there for almost 20 years, will give me

the knowledge to understand the culture of this city and communicate with the local residents in our dialect.

## 1.4 Research aim

This thesis is aimed at *exploring design solutions for activating Fengxi ceramic retirees by encouraging them to pass on their ceramic knowledge*. To approach this aim, I will explore the following questions:

1) *What is Fengxi retirees’ understanding of their life and their ceramic knowledge heritage?*

In China, until now almost all decisions of the public services are only made by the administration, such as, the “Active aging” programs. The everyday people who used the service might not have the voices to express their feeling and needs. In my opinion, to change their lifestyle and motivate them to pass on

their knowledge, we need to understand their opinions towards their own life and their ceramic knowledge heritage.

- 2) What are the ways to motivate both retirees and young generation to conserve the ceramic culture?
- Not only the interests of retirees should be considered, the interests of heritors also need to be taken into account. To create a dedicated solution for both social groups, we thus need to know how they want to collaborate and what are the factors that influence their interests.
- 3) How can my design proposal be sustainable in the Fengxi community?
- Activating ceramic retirees and supporting the inheritance of ceramic knowledge may require a long process

and great collaboration between different social parties and the local community. Unlike many other projects where designers had great prototypes and nice visualization of their concepts but failed to consider many long term practical issues, I hope that the design is enduring, meaning the service can continuous attract users and be self-sustained in a long term. Therefore in my design proposal, I will consider how the service design proposal can become sustainable and evolve in the community by continuously engaging locals. Rather than providing a concept, I intend to create a solution that could be more persistent by thoroughly considering different stakeholder's needs and worries, challenges and opportunities.

1.5 Research process and methods

According to Brown and Wyatt (2010) from IDEO, Design thinking for social innovation includes three spaces: *inspiration, ideation, and implementation*. “*Inspiration*” asks designers to deepen understand of the end-users, have empathy with their experiences and explore what they need. “*Ideation*” requires the designer to zoom out of the context, and find out the solution by synthesizing the pervious research. “*Implementation*” asks the designer to turn the generative idea into a concrete and fully conceived action plan, which helps to discover the unforeseen and unintended

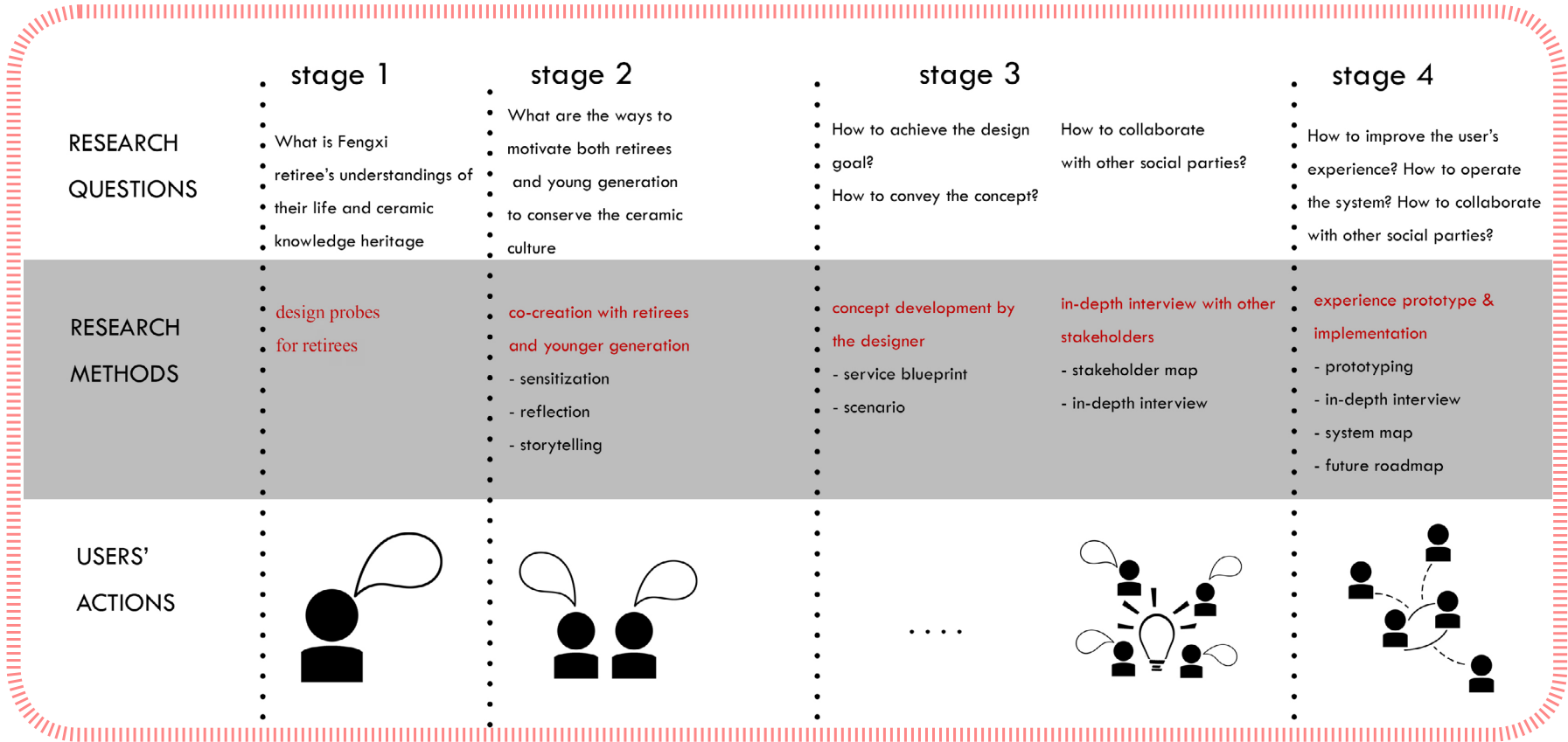
consequences.

In this thesis, I divided the whole process into four stages. Details of the design process are presented below(Figure 1.4).

Stage 1: Explore the local residents' real interests through design probes

Design probes were given to the local retirees as tools to explore their values and needs. It provided hikes for users to self-observe and reflect on their experience. Later on through the in-depth interviews, participants could share their stories behind answers and understandings about the research topic. Through probes, the designer could understand how retirees feel, and why they behaved as such, then explore what they might be really interested in.

Figure 1.4. Design Process ►



Stage 2: Co-create the dream situation with the different user groups

Three co-creation workshops were conducted with the retirees and the potential heritors to find out desirable solutions for both of them. In the workshops, participants understood the design values through sensitization, then reflected on their experiences through group discussion, and finally ideated the design solutions by using storytelling.

Stage 3: Develop the concept and discuss with other stakeholders

Ideas generated from the workshops were developed and visualized by synthesizing the pervious research. After the conceptualization, I looked at the service from a more holistic view to find out potential collaborations between different stakeholders and understand the real concerns and needs of the other social parties through filed research, stakeholder map and in-depth interviews.

Then finally I got support from a ceramic factory.

Stage 4: experience prototyping and discuss the service implementation

A prototype was then built to understand users' experience in a long period, which helped me to discover unforeseen challenges and provide basis for discussion with all stakeholders. In the end, a service system map and a future

road map were created to show how to operate the system and how to bring the concept into people's lives.



Part two

## **EXPLORE RETIREES' PERSPECTIVES THROUGH DESIGN PROBES**



Most of the previous studies on elderly people approached them from the administration's point of view, such as from the view of the social development. We seldom look at the problem from the senior's perspective to understand their interests and aspirations. Therefore, what was provided may not satisfy them. Hence, to create a desirable solution for activating ceramic retirees, the designer need to understand Fengxi ceramic retirees' attitudes towards their life and their opinions about their ceramic knowledge heritage.

To understand users needs, it is often impossible to ask the users for answers directly. As Steve said, "a lot of times, people don't know what they want until you show it to them." (Sheff 1985). Since many users are indisposed in self-expression and envisioning the

future. Designers have the responsibility to provide tools for helping them to express their emotions and opinions, as well as create delightful solutions for them (Sleeswijk Visser et al. 2005).

Design probes approach was selected to achieve this goal. Design probes is an approach of user-center design for understanding human phenomena and exploring design opportunities, which based on user participation by means of self-documentation, look at the user's personal context and perception and have an exploratory character (Mattelmäki 2006). In my design probes, I set up different tasks for participants to self-observe and document (Mattelmäki 2006). Through self-observation and reflection, participants was inspired, and got some ideas and thoughts to share in the further discussion (Sanders 2001). After receiving design probes from

participants, the designer interpreted the data by using empathy design and generated ideas from her intuition and creativity. To understand participants' opinions and explore their real needs, In-depth interviews were then conducted with the five participants separately. The materials from the probes thus provided concrete foundations for discussing the invisible feelings and attitudes, and generating ideas (Ziller 1990, Brown et al. 2000, Hulkko et al. 2004).

## 2.1 Probes participants

When selecting participants for my design probes, Fengxi retirees were divided into three types according to their different active levels. First, retirees who knew how to foster their time on positive interests, such as people who learned dancing after retirement. Second, retirees who had part time job, such as people who worked to relieve their financial burden. Third, retirees who did not have any positive interests or jobs after retirement, such as people who just stayed at home sitting in front of the television or those who went to the senior community center to gamble all the day. Retirees from the third group were the people who needed to be activated the most, thus I invited five ordinary ceramic retirees who did





- 1 overall view of the probes package
- 2 small notebook
- 3 inspiration cards



◀Figure 2.1. Probes for retirees

3)“emotional photos”, and 4)“ceramic attitude”. Participants were suggested to focus on one topic a day. However, they had ten days to finish all the tasks.

1) The “memories” topic helped retirees to reflect on their life experiences by asking them to look at their old photos and answered different questions, such as “find out three unforgettable memories”, “describe the changes after retirement” and so on. By looking back and reflecting on participants’ life experiences, they might be able to express their attitudes and understandings of life.

2) “Daily routine” asked participants to document their daily schedule and express their feelings on how did they spend their time. This gave opportunity for participants to observe themselves and reflect on their current life.

3) “Emotional photos” asked participants to take photos to express their emotions and attitudes, such as boredom, exited, dislike and like. The small notebook was used for quick notes when participants were taking photos.

4) “Ceramic attitude” asked participants to share their ceramic working stories and described what they like or dislike about ceramics.

not have any specific interests or jobs to participate. All of these five participants had rich working experience and knew many different ceramic techniques.

## 2.2 Probes Design

By considering the efficiency of probes may depends on the users’ activeness particularly for open-structured tasks (Mattelmäki 2006), when designing

the probes I needed to engage the participants. For instance, thinking about how the aesthetics of the probes could fit for the retirees’ taste (Gaver et al. 1999), and whether the tasks were too difficult for them. Knowing that seniors were not good at writing and expressing themselves, I instructed them to just focus on their real thinking and ideas rather than the language. In the probes, photos were used in different ways for participants to express their understandings and emotions that

was difficult to be described in words. Visualization has taken on a crucial role: as it could make the ideas more tangible, complexity more readable and alternatives shareable. (Diana et al. 2009)

In the design probes package, there were three components (Figure 2.1): dairy book, a small notebook and a set of inspiration cards. The dairy included four topics, which were 1)“memories”, 2)“daily routine”,



In the final topic, a set of inspiration cards with open-ended questions about ceramics was provided to stimulate the participants' mind.

## 2.3 In-depth interview: "Why?"

The design probes invited participants to converse their emotions and feelings by using different ways. However, emotions and feelings were difficult to be interpreted because they were determined by many different factors (Gaver et al. 1999). In Gaver et al.'s cultural probes, the designers only used probes for getting inspiration without data interpretation. Mattelmäki (2006) developed the "design probes" and suggested, *"If the intention of probes is not only getting inspiration source, but*

*also to extend, supplement and revise the collected signal, a personal interview is needed."*

In this project, probes was used to explore users' real interests and needs. Thus, the interview would be an opportunity to create an intimate atmosphere (Mattelmäki 2006) to listen to the stories behind those emotions and feelings that the designer got from probes. Discussing participants' personal issues would help the designer understand why people feel what they feel.

Mattelmäki (2006) suggested that open and positive atmosphere in the interview makes for a confidential discussion. In in-depth interview, I wanted to build the relationship with the participants

first and let them feel that we were communicating rather than helping me finish my job. When I conducted the in-depth interview with the participants, there were three main considerations for better communication with rural retirees. Firstly, the in-depth should engage interviewees to share their stories by using their own languages. Formal words were avoided because the interviewees were from a rural area of China, where they only had secondary school education and had not read or written for a while. Using official or formal words might make them feel very uncomfortable or reduce their confidence and enthusiasm. Secondly, the process of discussion should be adjusted according to the participant's familiarity of the topic, his/her experience and

personality, Thirdly, open structured questions should avoid making seniors feel bored or depressed, Rather than asking many structured questions one by one, I discussed with them and only interrupted them when they were stray from the point or did not know what to say.

In this section, all the participants thought that the design probes did help them to reflect on their lives and prepare for sharing their opinions. Looking at the old photos and taking photos also brought them a lot of joy. However, they found that some questions in the dairy were difficult to answer, such as "describe your dream in making ceramics", because the question was so open that they did not know where to start. Since



they were not good at writing, they only used a few words to summarize their answer. In addition, the inspiration cards were not effective. Rather than inspiring the participants, they distracted and confused the participants. As one participant said, “I couldn’t understand the relationship between those cards and the questions.” Knowing the difficulties, in the in-depth interview, I discussed the open questions with them by using daily conversation.

2.4 Findings

From the probes and in-depth interview, I attained rich data, and was able to understand the ceramic retirees’ attitudes towards their life and their ceramic knowledge, as well as to explore different factors affecting their attitudes and emotions.

2.4.1 Understanding retirees’ life attitudes

**First, Strong frustration due to role change**  
Although retirees might still want to show their skills and abilities after retirement, they don’t have many chances to do it. Then they felt frustrated and discouraged. In the probes, one of the participants took a photo of TV sit-coms to express his most boring activity



▲ Figure 2.2. “A Photo of most boring activity” taken by the participant

(Figure 2.2). He explained, “Watching TV sit-coms is the most boring compared to programs about policy and economic issues, because they are all nonsense and won’t help me improve myself.” Later on from the discussion with him, I found out he used to be a very important person for supporting his family. Most of his time and energy was spent on his job, and now he already got used to evaluate the value of his activity by how much he can achieve.

**Second, without proper support, retirees don’t know how to change their unhealthy lifestyle**  
Retirees might notice that their life was unhealthy, and wanted to change it by searching for new activities. However, they were most likely to give up in the



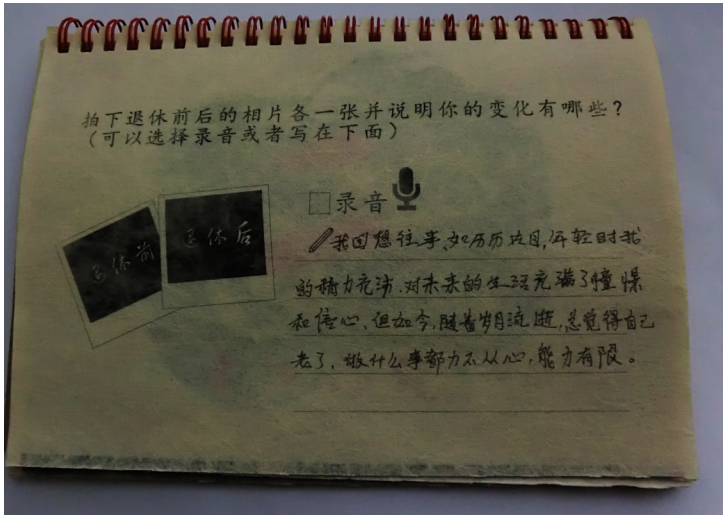
▲ Figure 2.3. “A Photo of most boring activity” taken by the participant

end due to the lack of support from others. One participant took a photo of herself at home (Figure 2.3) to express the boredom. She said, “staying at home all the day without doing anything is bored.” To be more active, she wanted to learn how to dance at a dancing club nearby. However, she didn’t because she did not want to go alone. In another interview, the participant mentioned that sometimes she wanted to organize some activities, but she was afraid to bother others. She had some friends, but without the purpose of work, they rarely contact each other.

**Third, felt too old to try new things and create dreams**  
Retirees were not willing to try new things, create dreams, and change







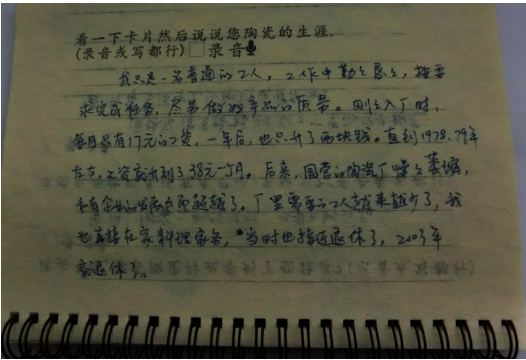
◀ Figure 2.4. Task from the dairy asked retirees to look at his/her photos, and then tell what has changed after retirement.

themselves because they started to lose their confidence. In the dairy, the participant said (Figure 2.4), “Looking back to the past, memories are still fresh. When I was young, life was full of energy, and I was always looked forward to the future. I had confidence, but now I always feel old and have a limited capacity to do thing I want.” The participant then explained that she started to notice that her health condition was so decreasing that she could not work as long and hard as she used. She started to place herself in the category of “elderly people”. In her opinion, the life of “elderly people” shouldn’t be crazy. Instead, she should be satisfied with staying at home all the day and having good rest.

2.4.2 Understanding retirees’ attitude about their Ceramic knowledge

*Retirees understand the importance of heritage the ceramic culture.*

Working in the ceramic industry for years, retirees understood the importance to inherit and develop this culture from the social perspective. One of the retirees said that, “right now, no one is really developing this culture. Ceramics as the most important identity of Fengxi may disappear in the future.” “If the ceramic industry continue produced low quality products, the ceramic crisis



▲ Figure 2.5. A task from the dairy: “Look at the inspiration cards and describe your ceramic career”

may become even more serious.” In addition, they also understood that they had learned many skills that might be beneficial for others. One retiree felt discouraged by the fact that she couldn’t use the ceramic skills she had learned before, now.

*However, there are different negative feelings affect them to pass on their knowledge.*

*Firstly, in their opinion, rather than a culture, ceramics is a dry job*

Although some retirees worked in ceramic, they may not have enjoyed their job. When search for a job, retirees did not really consider their own interest, because it was difficult to get the job. One of the Retirees said that,



▲ Figure 2.6. “A photo about an activity I hate” taken by the participant

in the 70s, when she started to work, the Chinese government arranged all the jobs. Ceramics as the main industry in Fengxi was the most common job that young people could get. “When I got the job, I was very satisfied” she said. In the dairy, one retiree described her ceramic career (Figure 2.5) as: “I am just an ordinary worker. I worked hard by following the order. What I wanted to achieve was meet the requirement of the factory. When I started working in the factory, I only received 17 Yuan per month. One year later, the salary only raised 2 Yuan. And it was until, 1978 or 79, the salary was raised to 38 Yuan....” In her mind, ceramic knowledge was only a tool for making money but not culture or art. In



addition, working in the same industry for years, they might feel tired. When facing thousands of ceramics everyday for many years, one participant became fatigue visually. She took a photo of ceramic factory (Figure 2.6) and explained that working in the ceramic factory every day was dry, because rather than focusing on the creativity of the product, she needed to focus on the quality and efficiency.

***Secondly, ceramics was considered to be a tiring and dirty job.***

A retiree told me that when working in the factory, sometimes she had to move the ceramic model, which was more than 20kg, or staying beside the kiln for a long period of time, where it was more than 40 centigrade. What is most

than the poor working conditions, is the low salary. She also said that ceramics factories were always producing low priced products with high-energy consumption and generating huge pollution, which wasn't good for the future. In her opinion, ceramics industry is tiring, dirty and no future. She did not want her children to learn anything about ceramics.

***Thirdly, as ordinary retirees, they don't have enough confidence to teach others***

One of the retirees said, that *"even though I had made thousands of ceramics, none of the consumers recognized me."* She felt surprise to be asked to inherit their knowledge. In her opinion, as normal ceramic retirees, her skills are not special or valuable to

share with others. *"Only those ceramic experts were good at ceramics and were able to inherit the ceramic culture."* She said. In Fengxi, there is great competition in the ceramics industry. Ordinary retirees may lose their confident when comparing with ceramic experts. Traditionally, when talking about ceramic culture heritage, people would consider it as a job for ceramic experts. Ordinary retirees might thus felt that it was too complicated and heavy for them.

## 2.5 Framing the design

From the pervious research, I explored different factors causing ceramic retirees' negative life attitudes and affecting them to pass on their ceramic knowledge. To solve the problem, I elaborated four design directions by considering retirees' real needs and interests.

***Firstly, provide proper support and good organization to change retirees' unhealthy lifestyle***

From the findings, we know that the retirees don't know how to change their unhealthy lifestyle without support. Therefore, it is important to find out what will motivate them to access new activities and provide them with



necessary support to enable their activities.

***Secondly, treat ceramics as a culture and tradition rather than a career***

Considering ceramics as a career brings a lot of pressure, focusing on the outcome may kill the playfulness of making ceramics. The main goal of inheriting the ceramic knowledge could be for fun or self-interest. When asking retirees to pass on their knowledge, we could start from something that they are interested in or never had the chance to try when they were working. Moreover, when working with people who have passion with ceramics, they may also be stimulated and looked at ceramics from the other angle.

***Thirdly, empower retirees to value their expertise***

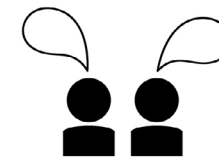
Comparing knowledge with experts makes retirees feel that they are useless. However, when comparing their knowledge with the younger generation who don't know ceramics at all, they may find that they are skilled. This may also help them to understand that even though they are growing older, they have got richer experiences to contribute to the society in other means.

***Fourthly, create other meanings to attract retirees***

Years of working in the same industry makes retirees feel tired, thus they may not want to repeat the same activity

after retirement. To invite them to pass on their knowledge, it is thus required to create other meanings for them. For example, by teaching different young people, they may see different new ideas and be inspired.





Part three

**CO-CREATE THE DREAM  
SITUATION WITH  
DIFFERENT USER GROUPS**



From the design probes, I was able to explore the retirees' real interests and needs. I thus focused on inheritance of ceramic knowledge that retirees are familiar with or interested in, as well as its cultural and traditional meanings. As a first step, I aimed to involve young people who are interested in ceramic and want to explore this culture.

To explore motivations and desirable ways for both retirees and the potential heritors to conserve Fengxi ceramic culture, I took the co-creation approach (Holmlid 2009). Cottam and Leadbeter (2004) emphasized, *“co-creation is a creative and interactive process, which challenges the views of all parties and seeks to combine professional and local expertise in new way.”* Here,

expertise means experts in their own experience. By collaborating with the local retirees and potential heritors, the design can be localized to meet their real interests and needs.

The whole process was divided into three sessions, including (1) sensitization, (2) reflection and (3) co-creation. First, the sensitization workshop provided participants with a shared opportunity to make ceramics together and by doing that the ceramic knowledge transmitted. The participants could also share their experiences and thoughts, and I, and a designer, could observe the interactions between the participants, and be inspired. Then, the reflection

workshop invited five of the participants from the first workshop to share their feeling about their experiences, as well as their aspirations, which allowed me to understand their behaviors and discuss how to better organize the co-created ceramic activity. Lastly, in the co-creation workshop, the participants from the second workshop were brought together to create their dream situations, in which both social groups' interests would be considered, and the desirable ways to enable their activities would be discussed.

**3.1 Step 1: Sensitization Workshop**  
The sensitization workshop was organized to invite participants to my initial design directions, and prepare for further discussion. It was a one-day workshop, which brought different generations with shared interests in painting ceramics together. Through the active involvement, participants gained the first-hand appreciations, which built the foundation for further discussion (Buchenau and Suri 2000). Borrowed the approach from design probes that asked users to self-observe and document (Mattelmäki 2006), a task book was also given to the participants, which asked them to reflect on their experience and write down what they like, dislike and their dreams. The task book would then





◀ Figure 3.1. The “sensitization” workshop

be discussed in the next workshop. The designer also observed the interactions between different participants, and took photos to turn intangible effects into tangible, providing a good base for the up coming discussion.

3.1.1 Participants and a setting

Three ceramic retirees participated in the workshop. They were ordinary workers who used to paint ceramics in the same ceramic factories. But had not seen each other for a while. Two of the retirees still occasionally paint ceramics at home. One of them had not touched ceramics for almost 30 years. Five students, who were not familiar with the ceramic retirees, participated in the workshop. All of the students didn't

have any foundation about ceramics but wanted to explore this culture.

This workshop was hold in an old volunteer's home, and focused on the ceramic painting skills. The structure of this workshop included three parts (Figure 3.1):

**1. Introduction and ceramic painting:** young people were introduced to the older generation, and encouraged to ask retirees for help whenever they need. Participants were told to paint as they wished by using the provided tools and materials included pigment, brush pens, ceramic leftover and so on. References of ceramics were also provided to inspire them.

**2. Small activity:** because it was a full

1 overall view of the sensitization workshop 3 having lunch together

2 provided materials 4 task book





Figure 3.2. A retiree was trying to ►  
paint ceramic again

day workshop, I provided lunch for all the participants. During lunch they could also have opportunities to chat and know more about each other.

**3. Observation and self-reflection:** except observed and recorded the activity by myself, I also asked all the participants to reflect on their ceramic painting experience and answer different questions on a provided task book, such as *“Write down 10 reasons why you like the activity?” “Write down 10 reasons you why dislike the activity?” “What do you wish you do next?”* and so on.

Activity of ceramic making helped the participants to understand their experience of co-creating ceramic with other generation. In the sensitization workshop, all the participants enjoyed the process of making ceramic together and conversing. In the beginning, they

were unclear about the purpose for drawing ceramics together, and what they can do with the ceramic they made and so on. However, when they started to draw ceramic together, the process created more meanings for them, and that they started to forget about the outcome and started to understand the value of my design.

**3.1.2 Observation**

From the workshop, the designer also got many inspirations. Here, I will present the most important findings I got from this workshop.

**1) Bring retirees’ memory and confidence back**

After many years’ absent, a retiree still could remember her painting skills made her felt proud (Figure 3.2). Before she painted ceramics, she was a bit worried







Figure 3.3. Making ceramic again with old colleagues



Figure 3.4. "Friends' reunion"



Figure 3.5. With the help from the retirees, the student was able to paint this cup as she wished.



Figure 3.6. Students were searching for some references from the Internet

about her rusty skills. However, after trying several times, she discovered that her capacity was still there. The retiree was so proud that she still remembered her painting skills learned by herself 30 years ago. She also started to think about other skills she had learned during her lifetime, and noticed she actually got rich experiences and knowledge in different areas. For example, a retiree said that, *"not only ceramic painting, I also learned sewing, embroidery and many other skills."*

## 2) Old friends' reunion

The ceramic painting workshop gave retirees a chance to meet with their old colleagues. All the retirees in the workshop worked in the same ceramic factory 30 years ago for some reasons they hadn't contacted with each other for long time. Because of this workshop, they were able to meet again. They felt very delighted that they could again paint the ceramics together (Figure 3.3). When they were painting the ceramics, they started to share the stories such as how they learned the skills together, which made this activity felt like an old

friends' reunion (Figure 3.4).

## 3) Students could have their own innovation and be creative when painting the ceramics, which made the activity become more engaging.

There was no limitation when painting the ceramics, therefore students could paint as they wished. Retirees were there just for giving instant advices, but not to teach students what they should do. *"I want to create my own cup!"* one student said (Figure 3.5).

## 4) Learning together created an active atmosphere

Young students could shared information (Figure 3.6) and discuss what they want to paint (Figure 3.7). By helping each other, they created an active atmosphere to learn new skills.

## 5) Students could understand how to appreciate this culture by painting ceramics.

*"It is not as easy as I imaged!"* the student said (Figure 3.8). Growing up in Fengxi, she saw uncountable ceramics everyday, some were stacked on the roadside, and some were just threw away. She never knew there were







▲ Figure 3.7. Helping others to develop ideas and having fun



▲ Figure 3.8. A student was using the brush pen to paint on a cup. She found it was not as easy as she imaged.



▲ Figure 3.9. Student was asking how to transfer a pattern to the cup. A retiree was giving tips for her. From the student's view, it was a magic solution, but from the retiree's view, it was only a basic technique.



▲ Figure 3.10. Looking at retirees' painting, a student also wanted to learn.

so many wisdoms behind a ceramic work that should be respected. By experiencing the ceramic making, she understood the difficulties and started to appreciate this culture.

**6) Students' positive attitudes towards ceramics made the retirees understood that their knowledge was appreciated.**

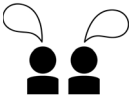
The atmosphere of making ceramics with students was really different than working in the factory. When students

were making the ceramics, they were so engaged, and curious about the retirees' skills. Different questions and new innovations from students stimulated retirees' mind. Looking at the retirees' painting, students started to ask retirees questions, such as, "Can I paint like this?", "What if I want to make something like ... what should I do then?". From the workshop, the student wished that they could learn the

skills with the retirees, which made the retirees felt proud. A retiree said that "This is real basic and easy for me, I never thought that it is so special and other people will be so interested in it." (Figure 9 & Figure 10)

**3.2 Step 2: Reflection Workshop**

According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), through discourse, group reflection leads to the reconstruction of the meaning of the social situation and provides the basis for the revise plan. After receiving the task book, I selected five participants from the first workshop who had different opinions



and ideas about co-creating ceramic. The reflection workshop was conducted to discuss their feelings and thoughts of making ceramics together, and suggest how to improve the activity. I designed the reflection workshop based on Kemmis and McTaggart's notion of reflection (1988).

*“Reflection has an evaluative aspect-it asks action researchers to weigh their desirable, and suggest ways of proceeding. Moreover, there is also a sense in which reflection is descriptive-it allows users to build a more vivid picture of life and tell what might be possible in the future (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988).”*

3.2.1 Tools and process

Sleeswijk Visser et al. (2005) explained that ordinary people may have limitations on express themselves and envision the future, thus designers should help them to find out what they need. In this workshop, different tools (Figure 3.11) were provided for participants to enable them to express their attitudes, share their stories and generate new ideas. With these tools, the participants could turn their intangible experience into tangible one (Figure 3.12), which were similar with the tools used in Culture probes (Gaver et al. 1999) and the generative tools (Stappers and Sanders, 1999), that a “toolkit” of words and images were given to the participants to make a collage expressing the good and

bad aspects of their home and work situation. In addition, to create a flexible and comfortable talking atmosphere, participants were told (Sleeswijk Visser 2005):

- There are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of this discussion was to listen to the participants' real feeling and understanding of the service. Due to the fact that the participants did not have any co-creation experience, and they might be afraid to say the wrong things.
- Everyone has the same statues. Students are accustomed to listen or follow the older adults' opinions, so that may not dare to object others and provide their own personal opinions.
- No need to worry about the language. It is good enough if all the participants

there could understand. Because of their limited education background, some participants may not be able to express themselves well in words.





Figure 3.11. Tools provided in the “reflection” workshop



Figure 3.12. Participants were sharing their stories in the “reflection” workshop







◀ Figure 3.13. A mind map was created in the workshop



▲ Figure 3.14. Looking at the photos helped participants remember what had happened in the first workshop, and to support their discussion.

In this workshop, participants were asked to share their answers and opinions step-by-step. In this process, we made a mind map (Figure 3.13) on a big piece of paper to organize our thoughts that helped participants to be focus and to avoid repeating.

**Step 1: share the “flection” on the task books**

The task book asked the participants to reflect on their experiences of co-created ceramics. To start, the participants were asked to share the “reflection” on their task book, which would be written the down on the paper.

**Step 2: explain their opinions in details**

**by using photos**

To remind participants what had happened, and to support their discussion, 30 photos taken from the first workshop were provided (Figure 3.14). Each of them represented a small moment from the first workshop. After sharing the “flection”, the Participant could select one or two photos and explain her opinion in details. For example, when the participant talked about playfulness, she should select photos to represent the playfulness and describe her opinion in details. If the photo she needed was not provided, she could also express by giving examples, at the same time, I helped her to write notes down on post-its.







Figure 3.15. 30 inspiration cards, which had a picture, and some also have a short heading , illustrated an activity or tool, such as cooking together, activity calendar, giving gifts, documenting my work, making new friends and so on.

**Step 3: generate ideas by using the inspiration cards**

After participants shared their experiences and opinions, they were asked to give suggestions about what might be possible in the future. A set of inspiration cards (Figure 3.15) was created in accordance to the pervious research findings. In addition, the task book that asked the participants to write down their dreams was used again. These tools were provided to inspire the participants, and to help them sketch a vivid picture of their dream life. The designer, who got many inspirations from the first workshop, could also generate ideas and give suggestions by asking questions, such as, “ What if...?” “How do you think about this?”

In this section, the inspiration cards were more effective than those in the probes, because some of the cards had short headings, and the facilitation from the designer. However, the participants still felt unconfident to select a photo to represent their opinion, since photos are slightly too abstract with different possible interpretations.

**3.2.2 Findings and design directions**

The workshop created an engaging atmosphere for the participants to share their stories and opinions. Through this workshop, the participants had an opportunity to understand the interests of the other generation, and get to know how to collaborate with each other. The

designer was also able to build deeper understanding of the retiree’s concerns and emotions. In this section, I will present the key findings, and how my understandings of the retiree’s concerns lead me to elaborate the design directions.

**1) To better conserve ceramic culture, it is required to remove the misconceptions between different generations.**

Before the retirees and the young people co-created ceramics, they might have had misconceptions about each other. For example, the retirees would use their own experience to envision that young people would not be interested in ceramics, while actually young people who were interested in ceramic did not ask them for help because they never

saw the old generation’s skills. “*With this service, we can talk more with young generation. We did not know that students are so interested in making ceramic*” by one of the retirees. On of the students also said that, “*We never know that retirees know so many things, so we never ask them for help. When I am learning with them, I could get instant feedback and trips, which are really helpful.*”

**2) To turn ceramics from a job to an interest, retirees should have freedom when they are making ceramics.**

To treat ceramics as an interest, retirees need to have the rights to control their activity and explore the other aspects. One retiree said that “*To be honest,*





▲ **Figure 3.16. Photos selected:** Even though the activity was rather simple; it still brought a lot of fun to the students. A cup made by the student based on her interest (left), a student was copying the pattern from her sketch, which was a technique she just learned from a retiree. (right)

when I was working in the ceramic factory, I was working for money, thus only focused on the part that I was working...now I can look at others and see the whole process of ceramic making.” The other retiree said that, “I can control my schedule now, so that I can work or rest if I want.” “Rather than just repeating the same drawing by following the order, in the community I could create ceramics I like now.”

**3) To attract potential heritors, we could start from their personal interests and provide them hands on experiences**

Existing education, such as visiting a ceramic museum may not be in the everyday interest of a normal person’s life. “If you ask me to go to the ceramic museum, we will feel very strange”, said by one of the students. By making ceramics, they could know how a ceramic piece was created. “I know that there are lots of things behind ceramics. But in our generation, we didn’t have any experience on ceramics, thus even the ceramic skills are amazing, we don’t know how to appreciate” said by Jia, a secondary school student (Figure 3.16).

**4) To attract new members, we could utilize the members’ own network**

A high school student said that, “My friends, who heard about this, also hoped that they could join the activity next time.” With this activity, retirees with same interest also can be brought together and motivate each other to pass on the culture.“ I always thought about learning something new but I was too lazy to move. If I have friends to learn with me, It will be different.” one of the retirees said.

**5) To help young and old generations to build their friendship, we could organize small warm-up activities.**

“It was our first time meeting each other, thus we did not know what to talk about. If we became friends, we would talk a lot more” one of the retirees said. To help people warm up, we can organize small activities for them, such as eating together. In the sensitization workshop, we had lunch together, which made young and old generations more relaxed, and provide them an opportunity to chat and discuss.

**3.3 Step 3: Co-creation Workshop**

The earlier two workshops helped the participants to understand the purpose of my design, share their opinions and discuss possible ways to improve their co-created ceramic activity, as well as allowed the designer to gain deep understandings of the participants, and elaborate design directions. The third workshop “co-creation” was organized to concretize the design directions by incorporating the retiree’s and the potential heritor’s perspectives and ideas. In this workshop, I applied a storytelling method, which is a more universal way of communication that enabled people from different background to share their ideas (Strom, 2007; Kankainen et al. 2011). In the co-creation workshop, participants from different age group looked at the design from different perspectives. For example, they might have different interest in making ceramics. From the pervious research, we knew that meeting with old colleagues and sharing their memories may attract retirees. While, creating personalized ceramic motivate young people more. In addition, when the participants were telling the story, they would also express what exiting services or tools they would like to use, and how their experiences would be



◀ Figure 3.17. Tools for the “co-creation” workshop



changed and so on (Kankainen et al. 2011). For example, retirees and young generation may use different social medias and existing network, therefore, they may have different channels to access the service and share information. Through the storytelling, the designer could get to know participants' context, and be able to understand desirable ways to achieve their goal. The focus of this workshop was not on whether the created story was right or wrong, but how it made sense to all the participants (Brandt and Messeter 2004).

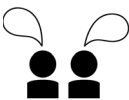
### 3.3.1 Tools for storytelling

In the workshop, different tools were provided to tell stories (Figure 3.17). They were used as:

- 1) Two character cards:** the participants were asked to fill in the character's name, age, ceramic experience and interest by using their own experiences and imagination.
- 2) A set of storyboards:** It is a series

of drawings that visualize a particular sequence of event. (Stickdorn and Schneider 2011). These cards were created according to the pervious research that illustrated different scenarios. The six storyboards would be used to tell a full story about how the retirees and the young people could use a service. After introduced this story to the participants by using the storyboards, the participants would adapt the story according to their own insights. The storyboards then acted as Exemplars to inspire, explore and analyze possible design solutions when creating stories. (Blomkvist and Holmlid 2009).

**3) Implementation cards:** These cards representing different medias and activities, such as mobile phone, map, television, internet, making tea, travelling and so on. They could be used to inspire Participants and help them to express their ideas when there was something missed from the storyboards. When participants selected the cards





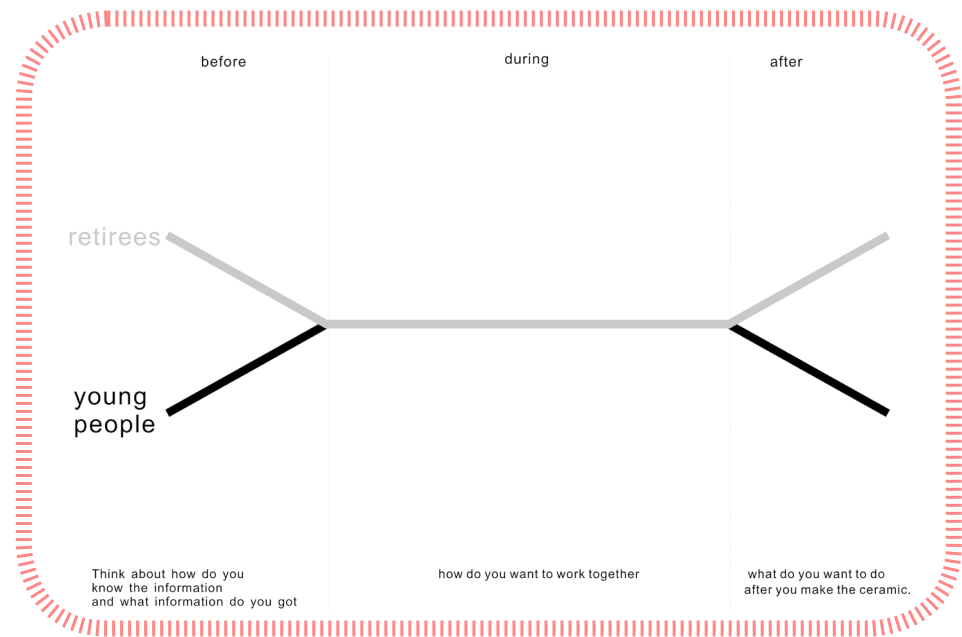


Figure 3.18. An illustration of the timeline

they needed to write down a short description on a post-it and stick it against the selected card.

**4) A big piece of paper with two timelines:** considering the young and old generations may have different channels to access the service, I provided two timelines with an overlap area in the middle representing the moment they meet together (Figure 3.18).

In this workshop, the participants created three stories (Figure 3.19) that were about “What will attract me to co-create ceramics with the other generation”, “What do I want to experience through the service”, and “ What do I want to do after using the service”. After each story was created, we talked about their favorite moments in the story.

The tools provided made the story more visible and easier to discuss. For example, the created role helped the participants to make decisions. When creating channels for the retirees to access the service, one of the retirees suggested the use of computer, however, other participants did not agree because they believe that this characters, which represented 56 years old in Fengxi, did not use a computer. Therefore, they selected the other channel of mobile phone instead. The storycards were flexible enough for the participants to recreate new stories, because they could be replaced, repositioned or removed easily. The implementation cards helped the participants to express how they want to integrated with this service with

Figure 3.19. The participants were creating a story in the “co-creation” workshop



other existing services and medias. With the understanding of the participants' assumptions and context, the designer can create innovative concepts on how a service can be experienced (Sleeswijk Visser et al. 2005). In this workshop, different than the probes and the reflection workshop, the photos provided were effective and playful for participants to express their ideas and thoughts. It might be because they were already familiar with similar tools, and had got the shared value and common understanding of the co-created ceramic activity.

3.3.2 Findings: step-by-step to activate retirees and inherit the ceramic knowledge

All data from the workshops was than analyzed. From the findings, I was able to find out to activate ceramic retirees

by passing on their ceramic knowledge, we could achieve this goal through three stages, including "Experience", "Explore" and "Develop"(Figure 3.20).

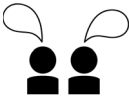
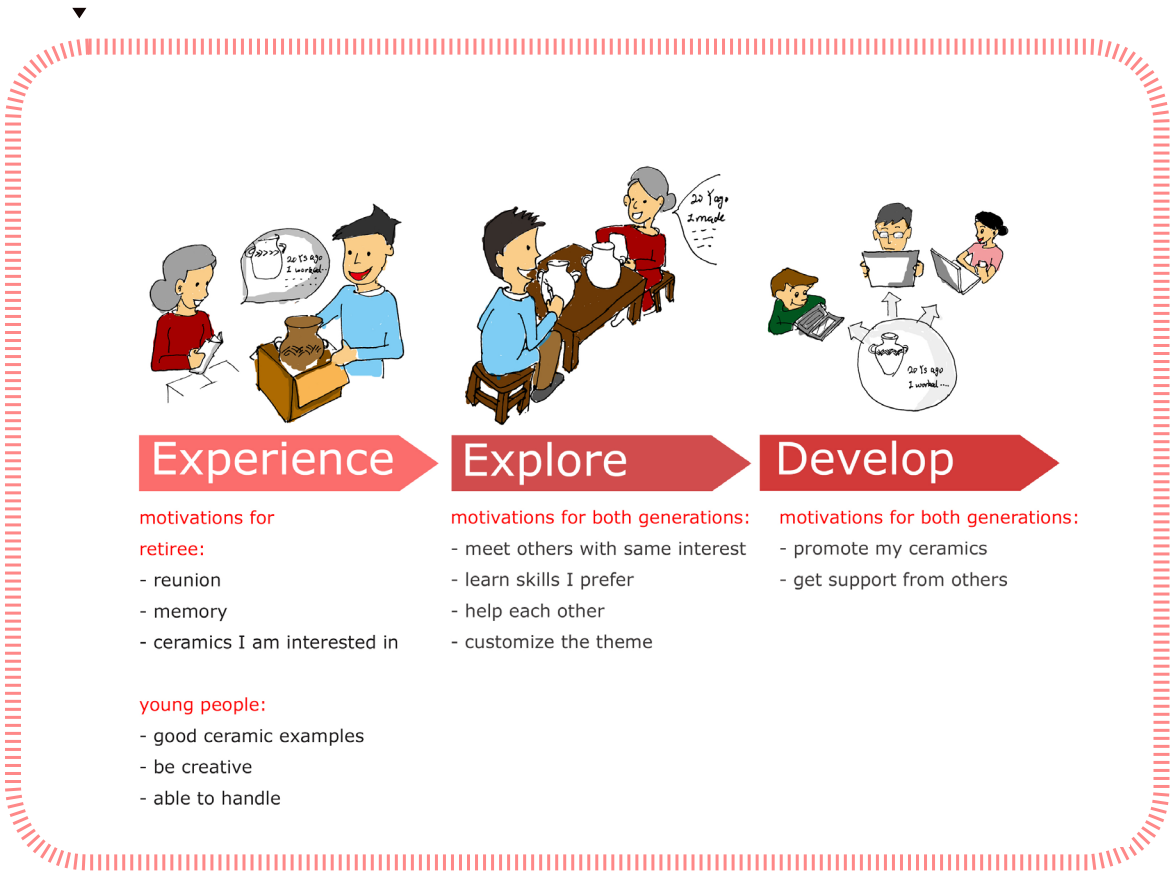
Stage 1: Experience

Inspired by the first story created in this workshop, I understood, at the beginning retirees may not have much interaction with the younger generation. They may be attracted by having a chance to meet with their old colleagues, while young people may just want to create their favorite ceramics (Figure 3.21). However, asking both generations to create ceramics will provide an opportunity for them to discover their ceramic knowledge and interests, which provide basis for the intergeneration communication.

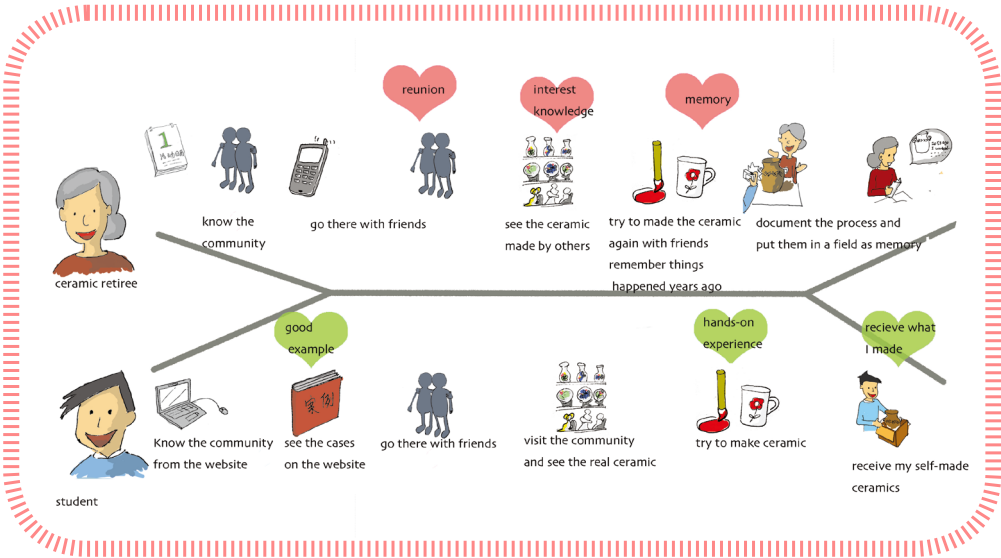
Stage 2: Explore

After experiencing the service, users may develop a specific focus. In this

Figure 3.20. Three stage to activate retirees through passing on their ceramic knowledge







▲ **Figure 3.21. “Step 1\_Experience”:** Transcription of the story about “What will attract me to co-create ceramics with other generation” created from the workshop

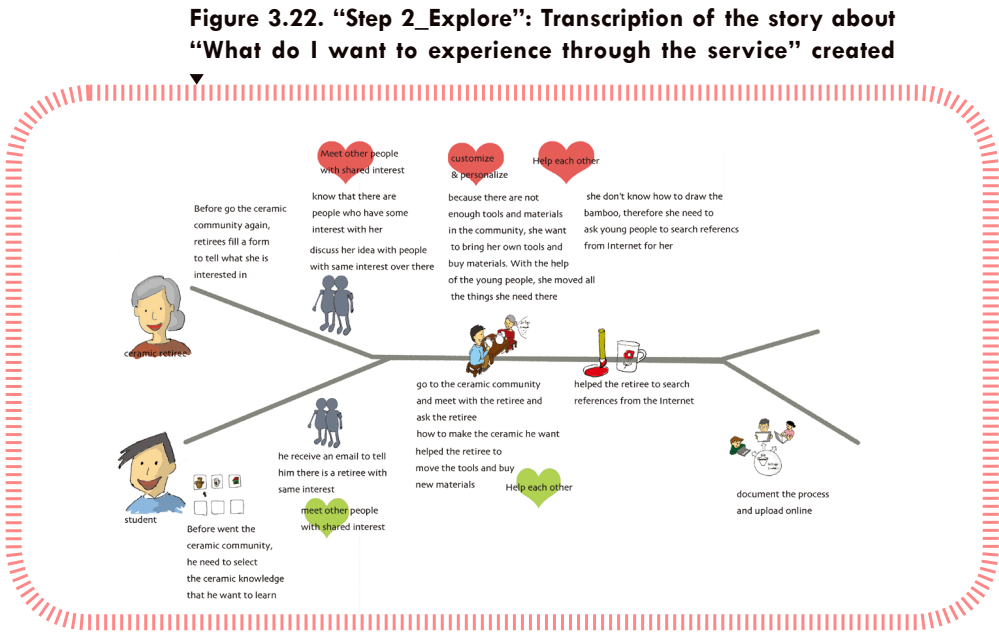
stage, people with same interest will be grouped together that young and old generations may have opportunities to collaborate with each other (Figure 3.22).

**Stage 3: Develop**

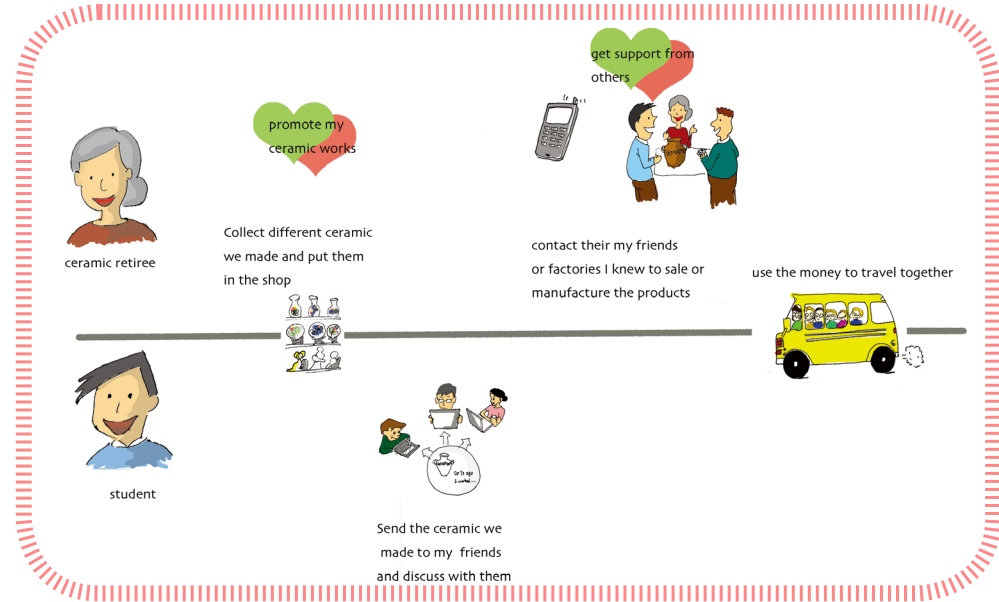
If retirees and younger generations created large amount of ceramics, they may want to show their ceramics to the others or get some support. By helping them to promote or sale their ceramics, we can also promote the Fengxi ceramic culture and attract new members (Figure 3.23).

The three stages also tell us how we can

build the community. At the beginning the organization may need to organize activities for participants. However, as time goes on, the organization can ask participants to develop the community by themselves and organize activities for others. Base on the 1% guiding principle from Ben McConnell and Jackie Huba (2006), to build the community, large amount of people may only visit or experience the community occasionally, 10% of them may have a specific purpose and want to explore more, 1% of the visitors may become an expert user who want promote ceramics he/she has created and help to organize activities for the others.



▲ **Figure 3.22. “Step 2\_Explore”:** Transcription of the story about “What do I want to experience through the service” created



▲ **Figure 3.23. “Step 3\_Develop”:** Transcription of the story about “What do I want to do after using the service” created from the





Part four

## **DESIGN PROPOSAL: THE HONGLO CERAMIC COMMUNITY**

4.1 The HONGLO ceramic community is designed as a service

Based on the series of three workshops held in collaboration with the retirees and the young generation, I designed the HONGLO ceramic community service, which will provide ceramic making experience for retirees and the younger generations, and enable them to continue to build on their relationship.

My aim is that HONGLO community will encourage Fengxi ceramic retirees to live in a more positive and healthy lifestyle by supporting them in creating a sustainable and proactive learning environment for the ceramic craft. In the Cantonese HONGLO means “red and green”. In China, red is considered the color for maturity, which represents the

retirees in this case. Green is the color for freshness and hope, which represents the younger generations. In China, we always say, "Green leaves bring out the shine of red flowers." I hope that by passing on the ceramic knowledge to the younger generations, ceramic retirees can discover their social value and become more confident.

Service blueprint methods was used to innovate the service of The HONGLO ceramic community, which considered the interactions between different user groups and the touch points in their customer journeys (Bitner, Ostrom & Morgan 2007). As we may see, the customer journey included three stages: Preparation, communication & team building, and development.

Figure 4.1. Service blueprint of The HONGLO ceramic community

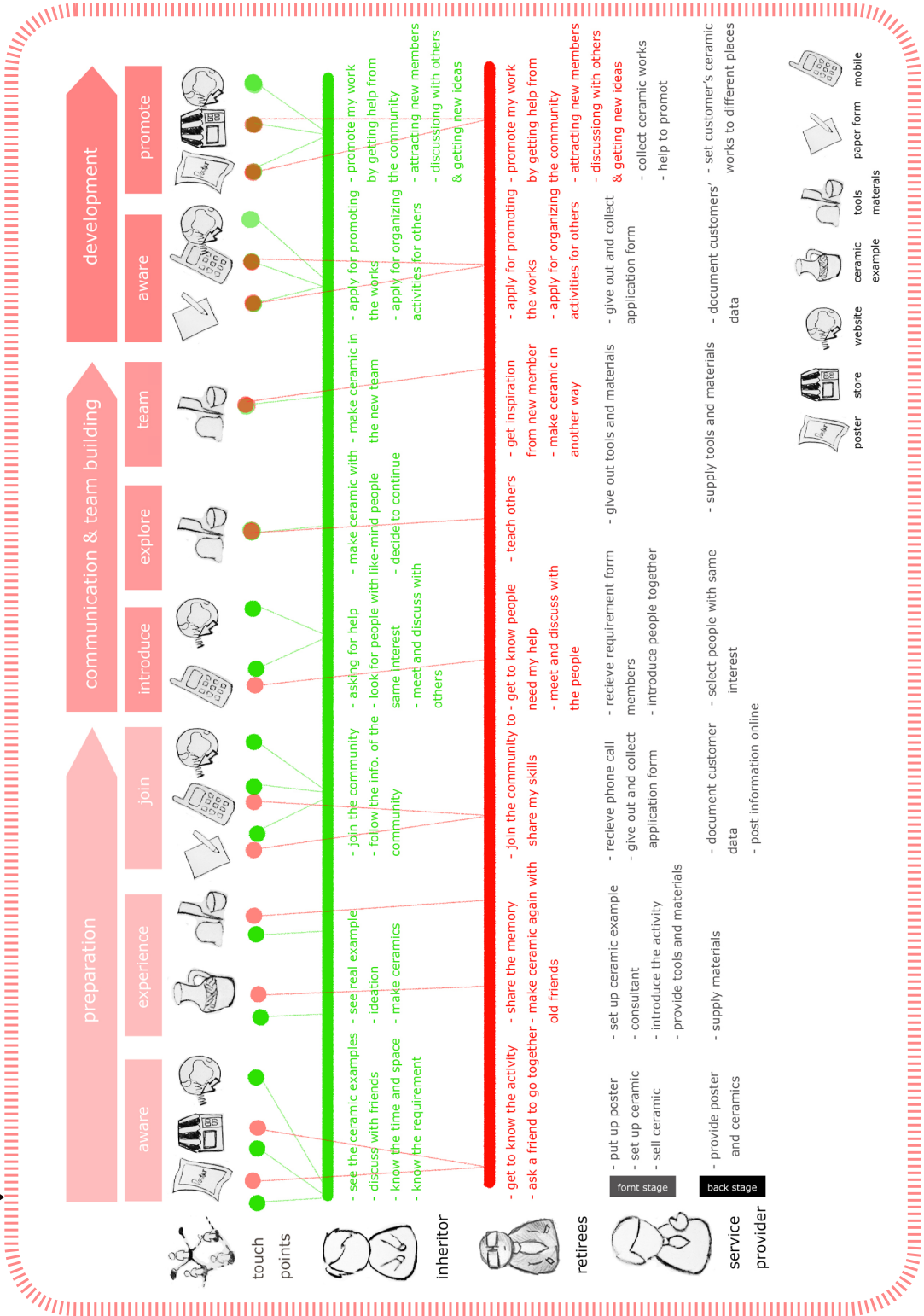




Figure 4.2. A scenario of preparation ▶

1. Preparation

Anyone who is interested in ceramics is warmly welcome to The HONGLO ceramic community, such as ceramic retirees who are bored at home and want to start new healthy activity with friends or young people who do not have much experience on ceramic making but are interested in learning a new skill. Through posters, websites and some physical environments, such as shops or exhibitions, the potential users may become aware of this community. The HONGLO ceramic community will provide a relax environment for visitors to sit down and talk with their friends, tools and facilities to make ceramics, as well as ceramic example and references to get inspirations. In the end, If they want to receive further information

about this community, meet people with the same interest or help to conserve the ceramic culture, they can apply for the membership through the mobile phone, the website or by filling a form in the community. By using this service, young people can make ceramics they prefer and enhance their understanding of the ceramic culture. While, retirees can share their ceramic memorize and show off their ability. All of these will provide basis for latter intergenerational communication and knowledge heritage. *Scenario, which is a model that represents the roles and the interactions between the participants in a service system* (Kong et al. 2009), was created to understand the user experience when they first entering to the community (Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.3. A scenario of communication and team building

2. Communication and team building

Members' information, such as their ceramic experience, interests and contact, was collected through the application form. By receiving the form, HONGLO can build a members' information database, which allows HONGLO to introduce people with the same interests or ask experienced members to help the others. In this stage, both generations may have a chance to meet and chat with each other, get to know each other's interests, and decide whether they want to continue their collaboration. When they are making ceramics, the community will provide tools and materials to enable their activity. Another scenario was created to understand the user experience in this stage (Figure 4.3).

3. Development

If the members want to promote themselves or sell their ceramics, HONGLO will provide different channels to help them, such as, by exhibiting members' ceramics, selling their design to the factory, or inviting them to create activities for new members. For example, HONGLO can act as an intermediate trader, and sell members' product. There is no limitation to the numbers of ceramics that the member has, and ceramic innovators will own their copyright. As a deal, HONGLO will charge some commissions whenever the product was sold. By using this service, members can gain financial support, and it will motivate them to improve their ceramics and inspire other people.



1. On the HONGLO website, student Bing saw Auntie Qiao's ceramic work and was attracted by her painting skills. Knowing that Qiao was always free at home, Bing thought that she may be able to teach him on the weekend, thus he sent an request to the community's organizer.



2. Auntie Qiao received a phone call from HONGLO. When she found out that someone was interested in her work, she felt surprised and agreed to teach him on the weekend.



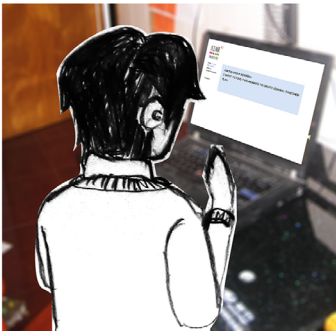
3. Bing showed Qiao his idea which used Qiao's ceramic painting skills to create a ceramic pattern. She felt so inspired by the idea, because Qiao never thought that her skills could be used to make something like that.



4. By the tutorial of Qiao, Bing was able to create his idea ceramics step by step. When painting the ceramics, they also shared about their stories and discussed how to make a better ceramics, both of them felt that they have a new understanding of each other.



5. When they finished their work, both of them felt very proud, and thought that they should collaborate earlier. Therefore, they decided to meet next weekend to make the ceramics together again.



6. When Bing went back home, he wrote down his experience on the HONGLO website and shared with his friends.



## 4.2 How to implement The HONGLO service in a community?

Even though this service is not aimed at gaining profit, it still needs to be feasible and sustainable. The HONGLO service was created with the everyday people who are not well aware of practical issues. For example, they might not consider issues like, “Who will organize this community?”, “What will be the organizer’s benefits?” and so on (Thinking. is, 2011). This new service thus might not fit the strategy of any organizations or the business model. Service design is a mediator that bridges the gap between the desire of the customer and the desire of the organization in all different touch points which represent every encounter in the overall service process (Moritz, 2005; Engine et al., 2008). To discuss the feasibility and sustainability of the design proposal,

I started to search for organizations that might need this service. First of all, I did a preliminary study to understand the existing situations of different organizations, and created a stakeholder map to illustrate the possible collaborations between different future stakeholders. In the end, in-depth interviews were done with the future stakeholders to discuss the design solution and abstain suggestions.

### 4.2.1 Preliminary study on service stakeholders

To find out organizations that might be interested in the service, I searched information about different organizations, which are responsible for elderly wellbeing, the ceramic industry or the ceramic culture in Fengxi. In the end, three organizations were selected to be the potential service collaborators. Details of these organizations are presented below.

### Local senior community



In Fengxi, the **local senior community** is the oldest and biggest non-governmental organization caring for the welfare of local seniors, and they organizes traditional activities for the

local residents. For example, in the Chinese New Year, they will organize parade and other activities. In the daily life, seniors can also go there to chat, watch TV, play mahjong or game cards. From the interview with the manager of the senior community, I knew that nowadays most of the residents only go there on traditional festivals. People are not interested in the activities there, especially the young people. Therefore, they are afraid that when they become older, the younger generations may not take over the responsibility of local senior community thus the tradition of senior community will disappear.

### Guangdong Fengxi Ceramic Technology Institute



**Guangdong Fengxi Ceramic Technology Institute**, which is a secondary technical school teaching different ceramic art and design courses. Normally, students don’t have any ceramics or art foundation before they study there. I found that almost 1/3 of the classrooms there were empty. Teachers there explained that in the past five years, the number of students in the school decreased rapidly. Moreover, students who were studying there were mainly the ones who could not go to the normal high school.



Small private ceramic enterprises



- 1 An old ceramic worker is cleaning the dust on the top of the ceramics. He had to continue this action at least 8 hours a day
- 2 Large amount of ceramic leftover are thrown away from the factory , which generates great environmental pollution.
- 3 Most of the ceramic leftover are still usable.

**Small private ceramic enterprises** in Fengxi were fully developed in 1990s to 2000s. However, in the 4000 ceramics factories, only 228 of them have their own brand. Most of the factories are just producing low add-value ceramics for others (Qu Zhenlu 2008). When interview with a medium ceramics factory owner, he said that ceramic workers were low paid and overworked. As the skilled workers became older and their economic pressure were more relieved, many of them wanted to retire early. At the moment, the companies had huge problems to employ skilled workers. Even they could reemploy

skilled retirees or delay workers' retirement, they would meet the same problem in the near future. From the fieldwork, I also found that large amount of ceramic leftover were thrown away from the factory. Many of them only have little defects were still usable. The owner said that those were ceramic leftover and second-class ceramics that they didn't know how to recycle, so that they just threw them away. It is said that, every year Fengxi generates 0.1 million ton ceramic trash (Nanfang Daily 15.03.2012).

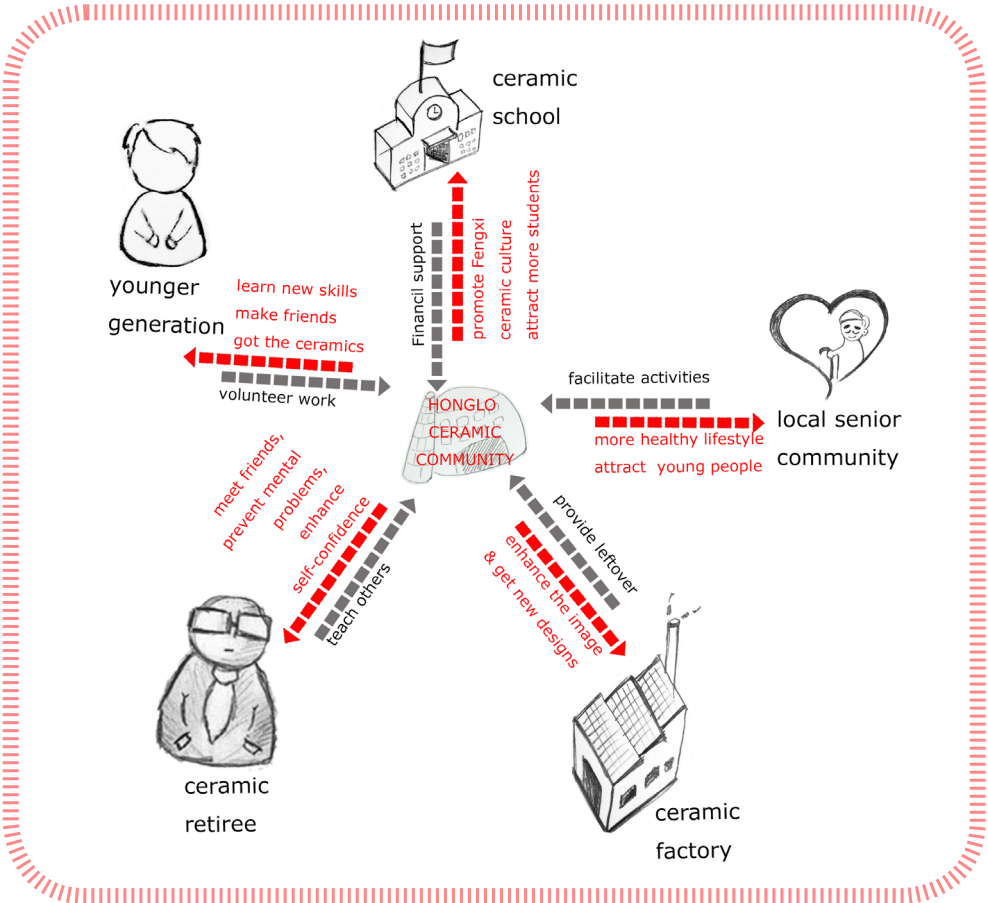


Figure 4.4.Stakeholder map

4.2.2 Stakeholder map

After the research, I created a stakeholder map to explore the possible collaborations between the HONGLO community and different stakeholders. The senior community, which has long history and great credibility in the local area, can help to spread the information of HONGLO to the local resident and facilitate the activities in their community. By doing this, it can provide healthy and

positive activities to the local seniors, and enhance its image among the younger generations. The ceramic factory may provide the ceramic leftover for free or in low prices to promote the factory and get new designs. The ceramic school can help HONGLO to apply founding from the government. HONGLO will help the school to promote Fengxi ceramic culture and attract new students for it.



4.2.3 In-depth interview with the future stakeholders

Three in-depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders from those three key organizations. After introducing the pervious research and the service concept, we started to discuss my research questions, which were focused on “How can the service help the potential service collaborators to create a sustainable environment to their industry?” and “How to collaborate with them by considering their strategy?” All of the interviewees appreciated the process that I deepened into the local residents’ life to understand their real interests and needs, and the way that we created the solution through our actions. Here I will present different opinions from the three future stakeholders.



Wu Siguang

Head of local senior community

*80 years' old, ceramic retiree, worked in the senior community for more than 10 years, organized traditional activities for big festivals and responsible for daily activities in the senior community of Fengxi Xixia.*

On one hand, as one of the ceramic retirees, he understood the experiences and abilities of ceramic retirees, and said, “As one of the thousands of ceramic workers in Fengxi, the retiree may feel that his or her knowledge is too mediocre that no one will be interested in it. By teaching the others, the retiree may see the value of his or her knowledge and thus gain confidence.” And “Retirees who were bored at home may expect new things to stimulate their mind and activate them. By teaching the young people, they will be able to see different new ideas.” He confirmed that the service could improve the welfare of local seniors by simulating them and enhancing their understandings of their ceramic knowledge.

On the other hand, as an organizer, he did not have enough confidence to build the community immediately. He pointed out his worries: 1) insufficient founding for new activities. In the recent years, the founding of the community that was mainly from the local residents’ donations was insufficient, because the physical needs of the local residents were still not fulfilled. 2) Not sure about the engagement. “I don’t know how may people will be interested in helping others for free?” the interviewee said. Later on, as an experienced organizer, he suggested HONGLO to focus on a small group of people who are interested in ceramic first, and then start to influence the other people, because local people may have different economic situations and interests towards ceramic.



Wu Jing

Teacher of the ceramic school

*worked in the ceramic school for almost 20 years*

First of all, as a person who taught ceramics for years, she pointed out a problem in the service. Many students went to the school just for spent their time, they did not have clear study goal and positive study attitude. She was afraid that only few students would have the motivation to study in their leisure time. Secondly, as a person who had close relationship with many amateur ceramicists in Fengxi, she agreed that to develop the ceramic culture, it is necessary provided support for amateurs. For example, if a student rent a studio, he or she has to create enough value of ceramics to cover the cost. However, many students only know the theory, which is not enough to handle the complete ceramic making process. Students, who don’t want to take the risk, thus don’t start. Therefore, she suggested to focus on students who are interested in ceramics but don’t have enough profession skills to work independently.



Wu Lixin

Owner of the ceramic factory

*65 years' old, owner of a ceramic factory, which has about 20 years' history, making ceramic models and low-volume production*

First of all, as a person going to retiree from the ceramic industry, he said that, “After retirement, some people are still young enough to work. Retirees who may have rich experiences are great resources for the ceramic industry.” In addition, as a factory owner, he agreed that using ceramic waste would help to cut the cost and reduce the environmental pollution. “There are lots of ceramic leftover that I just threw away or sold at a real low price, for example, 50 ceramic cups for 1 Yuan (10cents).” “Not just ceramic cup but also ceramic porcelain clay, glaze and even firing can be recycled in your service.” However, when considering the factories’ needs, he was afraid that the designs created by people who did know their production line and requirements may not fit for the factory’s needs.





4.2.4 Findings

From the pervious research, I was able to explore the possible support that HONLGO can gain from different social parties, and contributions that HONGLO can create for them.

**First,** HONGLO can provide healthy activities to replace old negative activities in the local senior community and help them to gain more young members who can inherit and develop the senior community. Since in Fengxi, at the moment, many people still don't see the importance of caring retirees' psychological health and still concentrate on their physical needs, instead of focusing on all local residents, we can start to build the HONGLO ceramic community from its lead users, who are retirees that prefer ceramics and young people who want to explore this culture. Because *Lead users presenting strong needs that will become general in the*

*marketplace months or years in the future*, may be considered as good examples to attract other ordinary retirees (von Hippel 1986).

**Secondly,** the service could utilize the ceramic leftover to cut the cost, at the same time it will help to reduce the environmental pollution from the ceramic factory. Since we cannot ensure that the ceramic created by the members can be used the ceramic factories, we may need to buy the leftover. After members created their works, we can show them to different factories and try to sell the designs to them.

**Thirdly,** HONGLO can provide ceramic amateurs an active and playful ceramic learning environment that may engage amateur ceramicists to develop their interests, and attract the other ordinary people.

4.3 Service collaborator

After discussion with different stakeholders, I finally found a service collaborator (Figure 4.5), who is a factory successor. Knowing the HONGLO service idea, she prefer the idea of gathering all the free resources, such as the free time of retirees and ceramic leftover to create an active environment for people who love ceramics, therefore, she hoped that she could become the service collaborator. First of all, because of the market competition, the factory was now facing crisis and searching for transformation. There were lots of available free space and facility but she didn't know how to use. Secondly, as a person who prefers ceramics, she

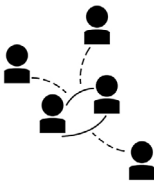
understood the value of creating an active environment for ceramic amateurs. Even the ceramic created might not be used, she would got the contact with different persons who love ceramics. According to the Tephany. Dehl's study of *cooperation social responsibility and local community*, *cooperation was suggested to provide cheap or free training for the local community, because it will be very rewarding for both staff and trainees, and the company will become a resource for the local community* (Stephan. Dehl. 2008). If the factory built the HONGLO ceramic community, it may become the resource for the local community, which would be a way for the factory's transformation.

Figure 4.5. Service collaborator



- 1 service collaborator
- 2 ceramic factory owned by the service collaborator

- 3 ceramics designed by the service collaborator
- 4 ceramic factory owned by the service collaborator



Part five

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HONGLO CERAMIC COMMUNITY



5.1 Prototyping the Service

Before investing in a large property, a prototype that is low cost, quick and flexible will help us discover and understand the problems and difficulties of the service from different viewpoints. It will also provide tangible support for further discussing. For this purpose, I did service prototyping of HONGLO ceramic community inspired by the approach of experience prototype (Buchenau and Fulton Suri 2000).

However, unlike ordinary service, a community is difficult to prototype. Because community is about social relationship and cultural process among

members, it requires time to develop and cannot be controlled by others (Cipolla 2009). Therefore, rather than prototyping a community, I organized a one-month long workshop in this study to explore possibilities of the design proposal of The HONGLO community in the local context and to elaborate activities provided within the service. Because of the limitations, I could not build all the touch points. Instead, the focus of this prototype was on the basic functions of the service. Moreover, in this stage, I intentionally did not include the aesthetic aspect as part of main concerns, but focused more on its practices and functions. Through prototyping the service, I wanted to explore questions, such as:

**How do participants interact with each**

**other in their customer journey?**  
**What are the elements affecting their interactions?**

5.1.1 Prototype settings

A studio for ceramic painting was built. A studio for ceramic painting was built in the ceramic factory where ceramic painting materials and tools were provided. Considering that the experience and relationship between participants may change overtime, the prototype was set-up for a month. During the period, participants could go to the community whenever they want. Below is the service blueprint of the HONGLO community prototype. (Figure 5.1).

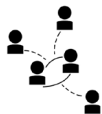
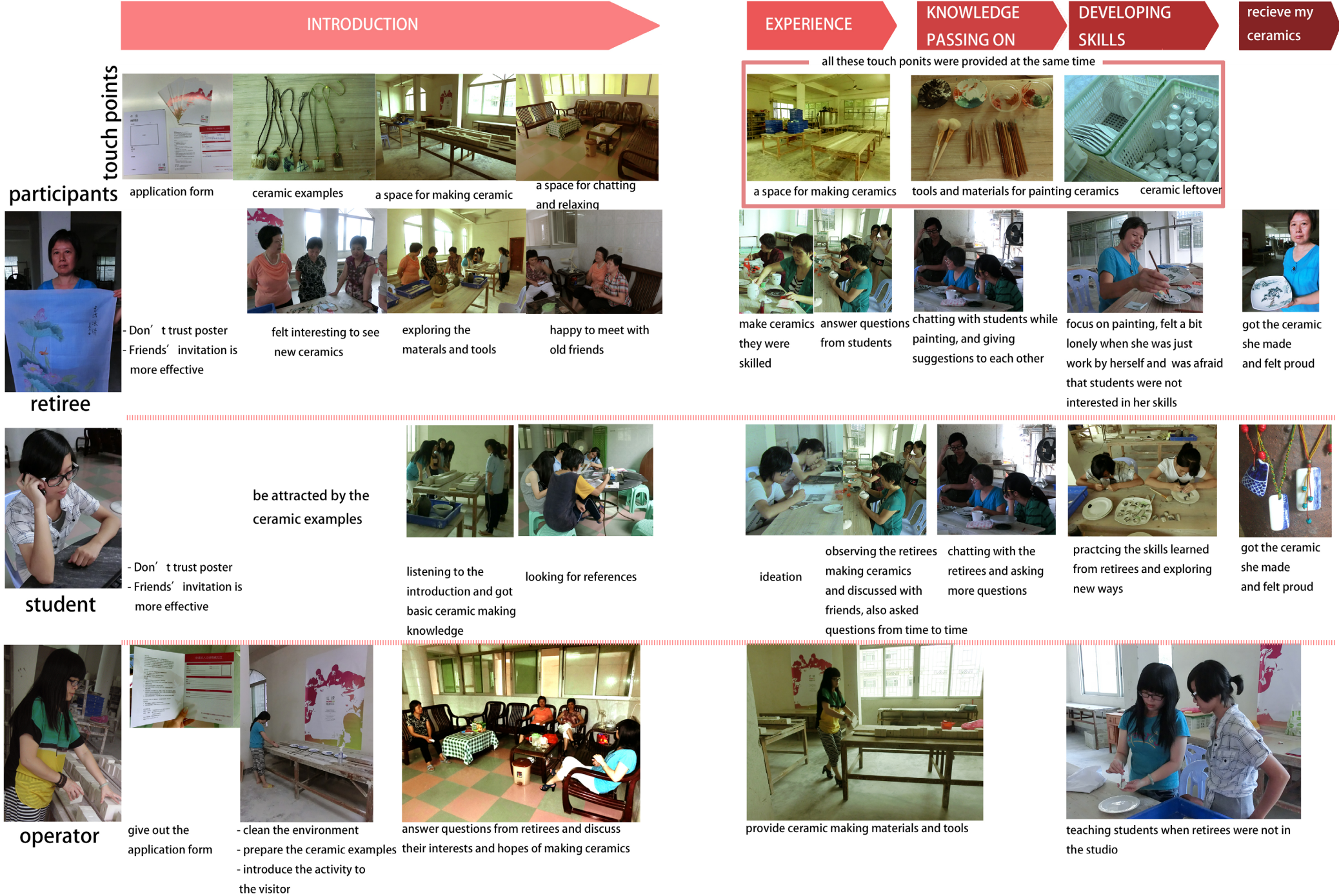


Figure 5.1. Service blueprint of experience prototype





**Touch points** in the service prototype included 1) materials for introducing the activity and ceramic examples; 2) a space for working and relaxing and 3) ceramic making tools and materials.

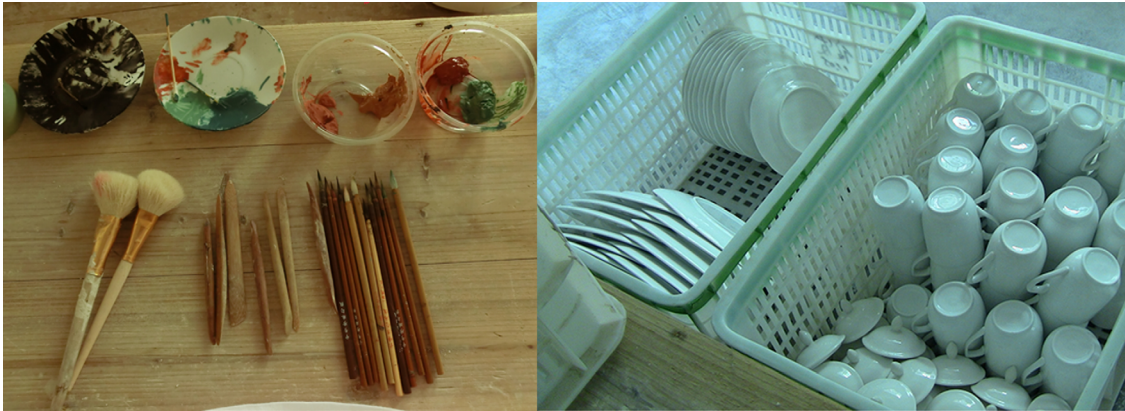


1) To introduce the activity to the participants and collect their data, we provided an application form that included the introduction of HONGLO ceramic community and space for filling the members' information and ceramic jewelry made by the teacher to give as examples. After collecting members' information, we also wanted to test whether it is possible to find out people with same interest. In the workshop, the materials for introducing the activity and collecting the participants' information were not effective. Participants responded to them in a superficial and generic level: For example, one participant wrote down their interest on the

paper, "painting". It is still difficult to understand their interest, because there are different painting styles, techniques, materials and so on. To clarify their interests, it requires to gather more detail and in-depth information, for example, by having face-to-face discussion with the participants. To invite visitors, direct invitation or invitation from a friend was more useful than the print-out materials. On the other hand, young people were attracted by the ceramic examples. It seems like providing ceramic examples that meet the participants' interests is more attractive than other channels.



2) working environment that was big enough for 30 people, furnished with different facilities for making ceramics, and a chatting room for relaxing and discussion.



3) tools, pigment and glaze, ceramic leftover from the factory. However, because the tools and colors of the glaze provided were limited, the participants still had limitations when painting their ceramics.

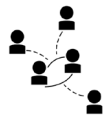






Figure 5.2. Discussing with friends



Figure 5.3. Focusing on their own activity



Figure 5.4. Observing



Figure 5.5. Passing on the knowledge

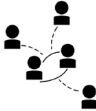
### 5.1.2 The participants and their interactions between each other

According to the previous study, to deliver the service, we should start from lead users that are ceramic retirees who love ceramics, and young students who are interested in ceramics but don't have enough professional skills to work independently. Three retirees and four students were selected from these two categories. When the participants are experiencing the prototype, I observed them in the studio. For the observation, I especially focused on how different participants interact with each other throughout their customer journey. From the observation, I gathered findings as followings:

- 1. Discussing with friends** (Figure 5.2): Retirees and students were exploring the materials, tools and ceramic examples with their friends. There were almost no interactions between the young and the old generations, because the participants in this stage need to know what they can do and what they want to do. For example, retirees might not interact with students, because they did not know who need help and what were their interests, and students could not interact with retirees without ceramic questions as well.
- 2. Focusing on their own activity** (Figure 5.3): retirees tend to make what they know by using their own technique. Young people however need to read references for inspirations. At that

- moment, all the participants wanted to focus on their own activity.
- 3. Observing others** (Figure 5.4): young people started to observe what the retirees were doing and discussed with their friends. From the observation, they could see how traditional ceramics were made. They also asked simple questions from time to time, such as what was the materials, which pen should they select and so on.
- 4. Passing on the knowledge** (Figure 5.5): as time went on, the students and the retirees had met for many times and started to become closer. Students started to ask the retirees different questions. For instance, how to use the brush pen and why they could not paint

- like the retirees, can they using the techniques to make something else, so on. The retiree also felt happy to teach. As a retiree said that, *"I always prefer young people to learn together with me...Only if you are interested, I will teach whatever I know."* When they were sharing and painting together, they started to chat and give suggestions to each other.
- 5. Learning by doing** (Figure 5.6): different types of ceramic knowledge should be learned in different ways. Principles can be learned by telling, such as which tools to be used, the steps for creating a ceramics, how to fire the ceramic...ect. However, skills that based on one's experience can only be learned by doing, such as how to





▲ Figure 5.6. Learning by doing

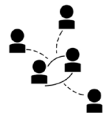
control the brush pen sophisticatedly and so on. Therefore, after the young people understood the principles of ceramic making, they need to explore the skills by practicing it. When working by themselves, they may have questions from time to time, however, as retirees were not always there, they thus need to solve the problems by themselves or ask the operator for help. When making ceramics, young people innovated their ideas based on the techniques they learned from the retirees, which would help to develop the existing ceramics. When they finished their work, they

were so proud and satisfied, however, when they have worked there for a long time and started to repeat the same work, they start to question why they should continue working.

### 5.2 Different stakeholders' perspectives

For interpretation of observation data, Keinonen (2010) emphasized that Interpreters' knowledge and frame of reference has a major impact on what is considered relevant and how is it interpreted, thus it is important to do the interpretation in cross-discipline team. To avoid biased interpretation, I organized a discussion session by inviting two of the participants and

sharing my interpretations of what happened in the service prototype. In addition, the prototype also worked as tangible references for me to discuss with the service operator and other future stakeholders. Through the in-depth discussion with the customers and other stakeholders, I aimed to **explore how to improve the service by considering customers' experiences and different needs of the other stakeholders.**





5.2.1 Understanding the user experience

- Main questions in the in-depth interview were:
- Which part of this activity do you find is the most interest?
  - Can you talk about your dreams/suggestions for the future activities?



**Interview retiree: Auntie She** (false name)  
56 years' old used to work in a stated-own ceramic factory. There, she learned the skills of ceramic painting. Although she loved to paint eves since she was young, she never had opportunity to develop her interest and create her own works at the factory.

What She was interested in was in the community people could help each other, and learn things they were keen on together. For instance, she could ask young people to find references for her on Internet, and the community also provides the tools and materials she need. However at the moment, she was spending so much time teaching others that she could not focus on what she was doing. After retirement, she wanted to utilize her time to learn things she was interested in, thus she hoped that the community could help her to develop her interest. With this in mind, she found that the students there were in a lower level and with different interest than her, she thus felt that she might not get much help from the students. She also find the schedule was a bit free that people only went there whenever they like. Sometimes, when she went to the studio, there was none working there, sometime, the students did not need her help. She was thus afraid that students were not interested in her techniques.



**Interview student: Xiao Mian** (false name)  
Xiao Mian, 18 years' old, Interior Design student at the local ceramic school, preferred to find her friend in ceramic department and played with the materials there. Since she did not have ceramic education background, she couldn't make ceramics as she imagined.

From her perspective, learning ceramics in the community was much more interesting than studying in school, because she could make what she love with her friends. The process of creating ceramics provided her a chance to communicate and discuss with others. Through asking others questions, she made friends with old people that she never had chance to talk to and found that they were actually very friendly and willing to help. "After making the ceramics for a few times, I wished that I could ask my friends to come here with me. Because if here has more people, the atmosphere will be more active, and the ideas will increase as well, and we could also motivate each other." Xiao Mian said.

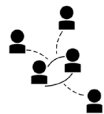
5.2.2 Service operator's



**Wu Shaoling, owner of ceramic factory**  
In the service prototype, she took up the responsibility to provide materials and facilities as well as helped to maintain the community. The prototype created a shared experience with her and foundation for further discussion. The interview was focusing on the difficulties of maintaining the community and its potentials

**Question one: What are the difficulties to operate the service?**  
- when people successfully innovate something, they may want to keep its copyright. "We should allow people to keep their privacy to some extend. For example, when we created new works, we may not want to show them to the public right away. Of course, we can share them with our friends or relatives, but just not with the public." Wu said.  
-"The students may just want to make what they prefer and if they have created good works, they may want to take it alone. The works they left may not be sold in the end. And also because they are just normal students, they may not be able to create great ceramic works, or they may need to take a long time to created valuable works, so it is difficult to be sustainable unless they are paid to make ceramics there."

**Question two: Is there any potential?**  
- Collaborations between different disciplines is possible. Different retirees are skilled in different part of ceramic making, for example, some may focus on glazing, some focus on modeling, some focus on painting. With this community, people from different areas may have the chance to meet together and collaborate together, which was rare in the factory.  
- The active atomosphere of ceramic making including enjoying the process of ceramic making, treating ceramics as culture and helping each other, helps to gather people together. The ceramic learning environment in Fengxi is quite negative now. The community can open the market of ceramic amateurs.  
- We already have an existing community but we never think about to it to make ceramic together. For example, our neighbors or relatives may already know the ceramic skills quite well, but without specific purpose, we won't discuss their skills or we don't even know what they know. With the HONGLO community, we can learn ceramics with people around us and enhance our communication with them.



5.2.3 The other future stakeholders’ concerns and

Chairman of Chaozhou Fengxi Lu Dong Rural  
Affair Office

Lu Dong Rural affair office is the governmental organization that takes care of the social construction of Fengxi area including the culture development and enhancing the social wellbeing of Fengxi. After presenting the project to Cai, we discussed about the difficulties and the potentials of the project from the political perspective. Main questions were: **“What are the real concerns of your organization?” “If we want to get support from the government, what will be the difficulties?”**

- The chairman did not believe the local residents could only focus on the process without considering the outcome. He thought that local residents now only focus on physical needs, like how to earn enough money and so on.
  - The chairman was also afraid that the ceramic master might not want to go there, because they only want to pass on their skills to their relatives. For example, the government has provided studios in the ceramic museum for the masters, but none of the masters want to go there. They were afraid that the others would know their trade secrets. Moreover, when the government holds the conference for masters to communicate with each other, they also didn’t want to go and shared their skills.
- Therefore, he is afraid that people who go there may only be ordinary retirees who cannot create valuable ceramic works to cover the cost from the government. If retirees cannot ensure that they can provide valuable works, government does not want to foster them because it is not economy sustainable.



The curator of Chaozhou ceramic museum

Chaozhou ceramic museum is the biggest ceramic museum in Fengxi, which exhibits the historical Fengxi ceramics and most represented ceramics. After present the project with the curator, we discussed about using the ceramic retirees as a channel for promoting the ceramic culture.

- The curator was questioning how could I ensure that retirees can provide the right information to the young generation? Retirees only know part of the ceramic knowledge and they only learned the skills when they are working. Because they are not teachers or ceramic experts, we cannot ensure the quality of their knowledge.
- It is Impossible to provide everything in one place, because ceramics includes different methods, materials, tools and facilities and so on. Instead of having one community for all, he suggested to have different small communities focusing on different ceramic types. The local residents who prefer ceramic can build the community and invite people around them to join. All the small communities can be connected to support each other.
- Ceramic artists and masters could also have their own community or be involved to promote the culture.

5.3 Findings  
and discussions

Through observing the participants’ interactions and discussions with them, I learned not only future customers’ experiences and needs but also a holistic view point which takes other stakeholders’ perspectives into account. Such findings provide directions to develop the HONGLO community more sustainable and feasible in Fengxi area. In this section, I summarize findings in terms of customers’ perspectives and other stakeholders’ perspectives.

First of all, the customers suggested followings to improve the HONGLO community:

- The community should have staffs to help introduce the basic skills to the visitors and answer questions when people are making ceramics. Even though retirees agree to share their knowledge, they are not willing to stay there and wait to help others. Students without ceramic experience may not know what to ask when they meet with the retirees, so It is necessary for students to explore their interest before introduce them to the ceramic retirees.
- People with the same interest or at the same level together would be introduced to each other. Before we introduce people to each other we may need to

conduct an interview to understand their interest. And before they start to make ceramics, we also need to understand what materials and tools they will need.

From the discussion with the service operator and the other two potential collaborators, I discovered that to make the service become sustainable and feasible, there would be some limitations for the service users:

- Asking members to pay for their activity in a low price. By paying for their activity, the service provider can reduce the risk of its investment.
- To share or not to share the innovation depending on the members themselves. Some information may be published, and some may only be shared with people you trust to. What we provide is a platform for members to build their relationship, but we cannot promises that everyone will get the information they need. After all, it all depends on the relationship.

In addition, from the discussion with the operator and the other two future stakeholders, I discovered that, to build the community:

- Instead of having one community for all the Fengxi residents, we should have different small communities focusing on different ceramic types in different areas of Fengxi. All the

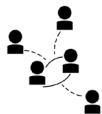


Figure 5.7. System map ▶

small communities can be connected to support each other. At the beginning, we may need to collaborate with existing organizations, who have networks with the retirees or young people who are interested in ceramics, to attract new members.

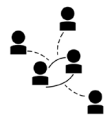
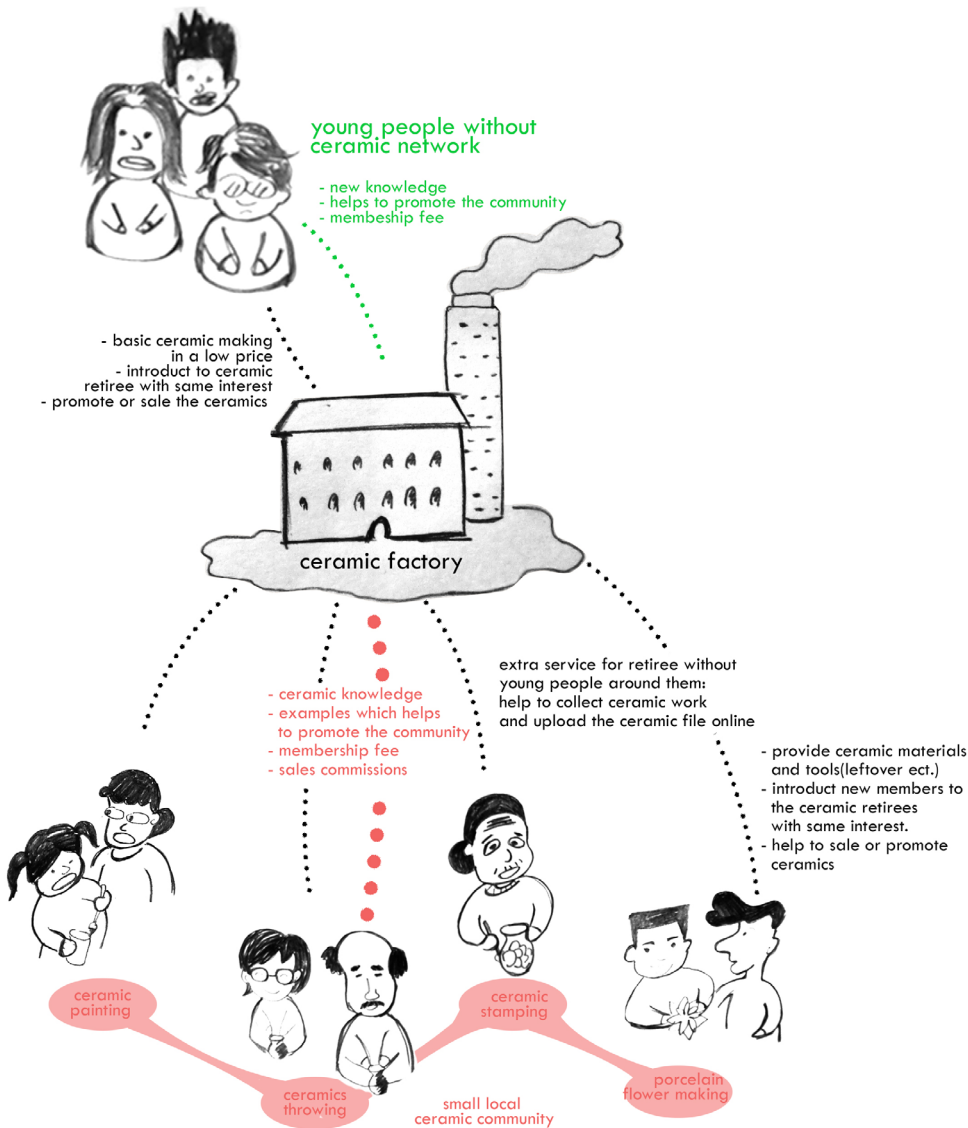
- To preserve and promote the ceramic culture, the government focused on only fostering ceramic experts, because they are the representation of Fengxi ceramic culture. However, the masters don't want to share their skills with the public. To get support to the government, we should show them other possibility to inherit the ceramic culture, which is creating a positive ceramic environment for young ceramic amateurs to learn and develop the ceramic culture, and convey the ceramic experts to share their knowledge.

- To inherit the ceramic culture, we should show the experts that every body's

understanding of ceramic has a great impact on the society, and learning the culture from the daily life is easier for ordinary people. In the community, everyone can contribute without worrying about their skills and abilities. Discussing different possibilities and sharing experiences in the community can help people to consider different aspects of ceramic making when making decisions.

5.4 Implementation  
5.4.1 system map

Morelli (2007) introduced a system map as a visual description of the service technical organization. According to her, the system map involves the different actors, their mutual links and the flows of materials, energy, information and money through the system. After the prototype, I created a system map of the HONGLO community, showing the collaboration between different stakeholders and the flows of ceramic



knowledge and ceramic materials in the community (Figure 5.7).

**1. Ceramic factory for experiencing ceramic culture:** young ceramic amateurs who don't have any network with the ceramic retirees, they can pay a basic fee to join the community. Their involvement will help to promote and develop the local ceramics. Ceramic factory should have staff to answer questions and introduce the basic skills. In the factory, new members can experience the ceramic making and explore their interest. With their ceramic experience and specific interest, young people will know which retirees they want to contact and what they want to ask.

**2. Small communities with specific theme:** young people who have ceramic network with retirees but have not yet experienced ceramic making, they will be invited to collect skills of the ceramic retirees around them and share the stories online. In the small communities, people can make ceramics at home.

The ceramic factory will provide them ceramic making tools and materials at a low price and help them to fire the ceramic. For the older generation, who want to make ceramics but does have young people who are interested in their knowledge around them, the factory can upload and expose their work online. Through the online community, young people can also explore other retirees' ceramic knowledge, and ask the organizer to introduce them to those people they are interested in.

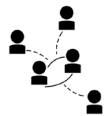
**3. Introduce young amateurs to retirees with same interest.** The factory can help to introduce young amateurs to retirees with specific ceramic experience in local community. Interview may be needed before introducing them and when they start their collaboration, we may need to provide additional support. The new member can then learn local culture with retirees, and help to inspire the local community.

5.4.2 Future roadmap

To envision how this design proposal of the HONGLO community can be strategically developed and evolved in the future, I created a future road map that visualizes how to launch the service step by step and when to involve different potential collaborators (Figure 5.8).

Generation 1: Building small local communities

Firstly, we will focus on ordinary ceramic retirees who are interested in ceramics. We will provide them tools and facilities to make ceramic with low prices, and help them to collect their ceramic works and upload them online. Senior community, which has contact with the local residents and a great reputation,



can help to spread the information and introduce new retirees to the community. Secondly, local young people who have ceramic network with retirees can build a small community by using their existing network. The local school can help to engage young people. For example, we can organize some competitions that ask students to make a ceramics with their grandparents and so on.

**Generation 2: Engage young ceramic amateurs without ceramic network**

In this stage, we will extend our focus to young people outside Fengxi and ceramic school in other cities. The cheap price of ceramic making could help to attract ceramic amateurs to explore the culture. Government can help to spread the information and provide founding.

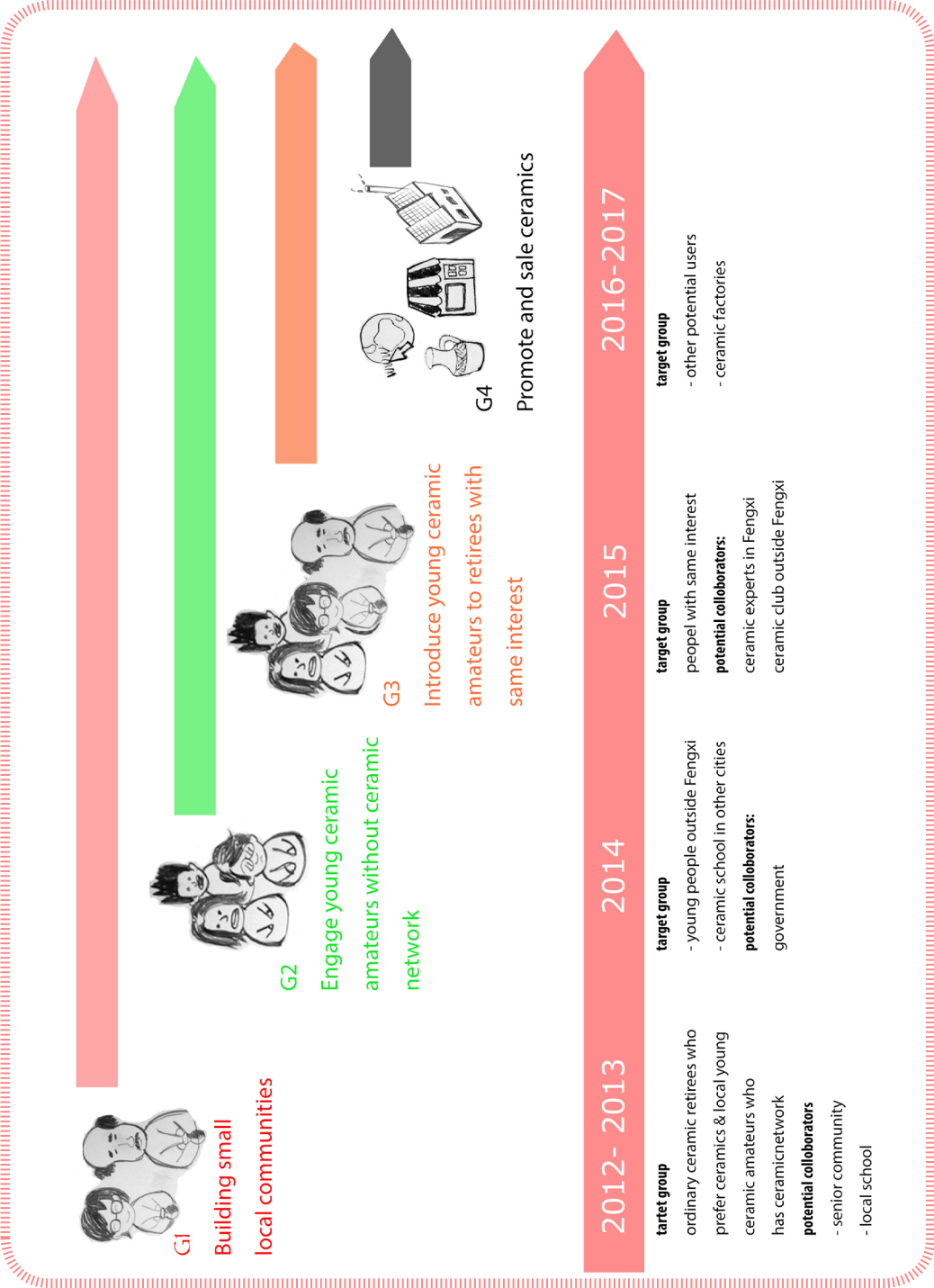
**Generation3: Introduce young ceramic amateurs to retirees with same interest**

We could help to group people with same interest together. Ceramic experts could also be involved, if the ceramic amateurs are already in a higher level. Moreover, we could also collaborate with ceramic clubs and ceramic centers outside Fengxi. If their customers need more information about a specific ceramic area, we can introduce them to the ceramic retirees in that field.

**Generation 4: Promote and sell the ceramics**

We can open our online store, sell the ceramic design to a company or find ceramic factory to help produce ceramics created by the members.

Figure 5.8. Future roadmap





Part six

## CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

### 6.1. Conclusion

This thesis focused on Fengxi, a rural area of China, which also is the ceramic capital of China. In Fengxi, ceramic retirees’ psychological health tend to be ignored. Without proper guidance for health and positive life, retirees may live in a negative lifestyle, for example, starting to learn gamble, focusing on superstition activities, or staying at home all the day suffering from loneliness and social isolation. At the same time, the local ceramic culture is in danger due to modernization and globalization. To preserve the local culture, it is required to introduce the local culture to the public and motivate more people to explore this culture. As it is said, “Active aging” can be beneficial for both

elderly people’s psychological health and social development. Given these situations in Fengxi, this thesis aimed at activating the Fengxi ceramic retirees through encouraging them inherit their ceramic knowledge.

The design proposal of HONGLO ceramic community was created based on the real needs and interests of the retirees. Through design probes, I explored retirees’ real concerns and ways to motivate them to share their knowledge. I learned that we should empower the retirees to value their expertise and ask them to treat ceramic as a culture and tradition rather than a career. Moreover, according to the three co-creation workshops, I suggested how to enable mutual motivation between

retirees and young generation through ceramic making: 1) “experience”, 2) “explore” and 3) “develop”.

According to these stages, the HONGLO community should provide different services for both generations so that the community can gradually engage them for building their relationship and preserving ceramic knowledge. To be feasible and sustainable, the concept was then discussed with different social parties and a one-month prototype was built to discover unforeseen challenges. In the end, according to the findings, the system map and future road map were created to show how the different service actors could collaborate together and how to build the community step by step in the future.

From the design proposal of the HONGLO community, I found the potential that this service can give retirees an opportunity to find the value of their knowledge and help them become more confident. Also, it provides ordinary people with chances for experiencing ceramic-making and getting familiarized with the culture through their own interest. By considering different interests and dreams of different users group, different channels were created. HONGLO provides materials and facilities to enable the users’ activities, and help facilitate their activities when it is needed. It also foresees the future of the community by motivating users to collaborate together, and develop the culture by introducing people with same interests together, who

helps to support each other, as well as networking.

6.2 Design interventions in HONGLO ceramic community

In HONGLO ceramic community, customers’ experiences may highly depend on their interpersonal relationship with other members. For example, if the young person has built a close relationship with a ceramic retiree, he or she may find it easier to ask the retiree for help. In addition, if a retiree has found a young person with the same interest in the community, he

or she may find it more interesting to stay there. In service design, this kind of model is called relational service: a model deeply and profoundly based in the interpersonal relationships between participants (Cipolla, Manzini, 2009). Cipolla (2009) explains that relational service requires high level of interpersonal qualities like intimacy and trust, more than any other kind of service.

In HONGLO ceramic community, what members want to share, and how much they trust each other depends on themselves, thus it cannot be designed and controlled. Miettinen and Koivisto (2009) explained that Relational service can only be “meta-designed”.

*“What designers can do is developing a solution that enables participants to co-produce their own relational service by themselves, supporting them in doing what they want and intrinsically operating on the basis of interpersonal relations they already have (or want to have)”*(Miettinen & Koivisto. 2009).

In Fengxi, ceramic retirees may already share their knowledge with others in their life in an informal way, such as sharing with their relatives and so on. However, HONGLO ceramic community was designed to enable people to create and develop easier and more sustainable relational service.

6.3 Collaboration between a designer and a local community for social innovation

First of all, methods, tools and tasks for participants should be selected and designed by considering participants’ interests, ability and so on, to ensure that they are comfortable in expressing themselves. Brown and Wyatt (2010) emphasized that “design thinking for social innovation” not only focuses on creating products and services that are human centered, but the process itself is also deeply human. For example, the inspiration cards in the design probes, which were intended to stimulate participants’ imagination, were found

in the end that they distracted and confused the participants. When discussing with the participants, I found that the cards were too unrelated to the questions, thus they could not see any relationship between cards and questions.

Considering this, in the reflection workshop, I made the inspiration card with a subhead, and helped to facilitate the activity when the participants were generating ideas, which turned the tool out to be more effective. In the co-creation workshop, participants started to play with scenario cards and implementation cards for three reasons: First, the scenario cards bring more information for them; Second, they already understood the purpose and values of the activity; Third, they had

used the similar tool in the last workshop. From this example, we can see that even I used the similar tool with different participants or in different situations, the effectiveness and efficiency of communication were really different.

As another example, in the reflection workshop, I found that one of the students was really quiet. Even though I invited her to talk and asked questions, she just said, “yes” or “I don’t know.” In the end, I found out she was too shy to talk with strangers. I think in this case, focus group may not be a good method for her, instead I could consider other methods, such as in-depth interview with her individually or spend more time with her and just talk and discuss in an informal way.

Secondly, in co-creation, participants should have common understanding of values and goals of the design. For example, if retirees and students who participated in the workshops did not understand why they want to make ceramic together, they might not have the motivation to create any solutions. Having a shared goal in the activity will motivate participants to collaborate together and contribute their knowledge.

Thirdly, the outcomes or ideas gathered from co-design activities with users need designers’ insights and careful interpretation. Users may not generate great solutions within a short time with a little knowledge about the project. The ideas generated from the workshop and

suggestions from the interview are just example solutions that they can come up at that moment. On the ideas created by participants, designers have to explore deeper what users actually need or why they like the idea. Then, designers could create solutions that are relevant to both users and the design aim. i.e., in this case social issue of “Active aging”.

**6.4 Challenges of collaborations between the designer, local community and public sectors**

**- Everyday people may not have**



**enough confidence to change the social situation at the beginning.**

*Social innovations are creative ways to meet social needs, and they are indispensable in maintaining social vitality, encouraging civilians' enthusiasm to participate in social affairs, and helping form a sense of self-governance (Yu 2012).*

However, the problem of collaboration with ordinary people was that they did not believe their ability to change the situation. Therefore, rather than helping them to find out what they need and solve their problems; they might consider the activity as just helping me for the research. Therefore, they were not very engaged in the beginning. Some of the

participants even said that, *"just tell me what you want, and I can write it down"*, or *"you can rewrite it if you need"*. But as the project keep moving and something was really happening, their attitude became really different. Some even helped me find more participants and introduced me to new people who I can contact.

**- Government does not have enough channels for ordinary people to access.**

*The government has said they will construct an "innovative country", but an innovative country needs not only innovations in government and enterprise systems, but also in society (Yu 2012).*

However, it was difficult to find out the sponsors from the government. In the early stage, I contacted many social organizations and governmental organizations, including the local senior community, Chaozhou civilize organization and Chaozhou culture research center. Only the local senior community replied me. However, the senior community said that even they like the idea; they don't have the ability to support this service because of the insufficient of founding.

**- Organizations are still focusing on the existing needs. To collaborate with them, it calls for measurable outcomes.**

After the conceptualization, I contacted with the potential service providers. Even

though they felt really interesting about what the grassroots were thinking, they were still afraid of the effect and profit of the service. Even the government has claimed that they want to create a sustainable society for the future, they are still focusing on the existing needs, for example, instead of thinking about the importance and potentials of the service, they are still judging the success and the needs of the service from how many people would like to use it and how much we would earn. To collaborate with the organizations, measurable outcome, such as cost and profit, is required. However, the qualitative research methods cannot provide any generative data as evidence.

*Social innovation will become an*

*essential cooperative platform for the State, enterprises and civilian groups. The State should provide general institutional support; enterprises should provide material support, while civilian groups should provide human resources, which is the leading part. However, all three are indispensable; only with the cooperation of all can social innovation take place. (Yu 2012)*

To ask local community to response for building a sustainable society, the governmental organizations should improve their collaboration with the local community and be more open-minded. As long as, the local community

can see the social changes because of their efforts, they will be more willing to contribute their knowledge and become engaged. Moreover, the organizations should focus on the importance and the influence of the social transformation rather than the existing needs. To create a sustainable society, the investment may not be able to gain any profit immediately, thus cannot be judged from how much profit it will earn now, instead it should be considered as how important it is to solve the social problem.

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